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Who leads the deviation dance?

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Of Minds and World Cities

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Magnus Carlsen

'I have to take my game to a new level'

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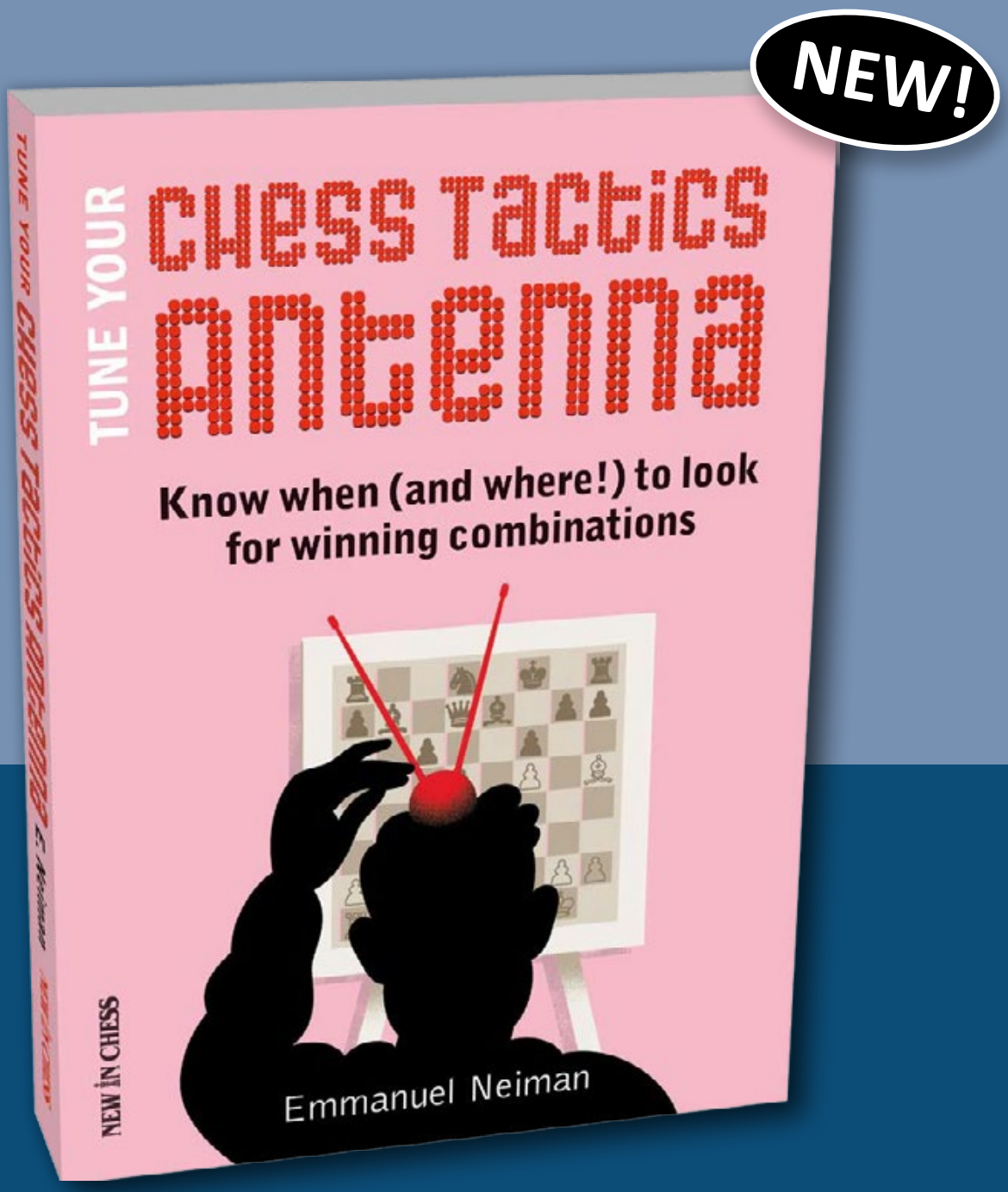

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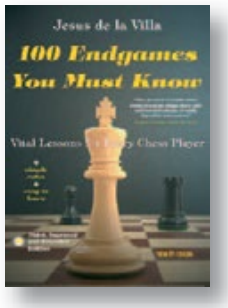

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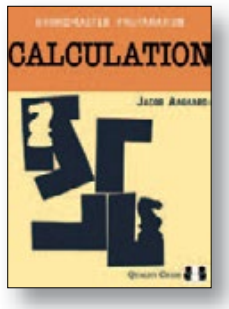

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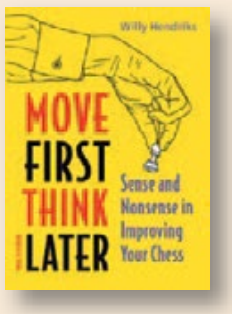

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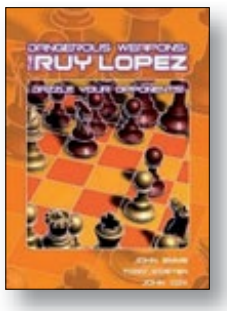

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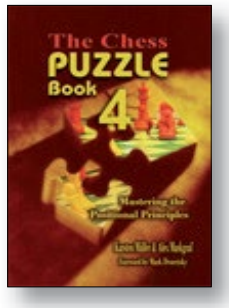

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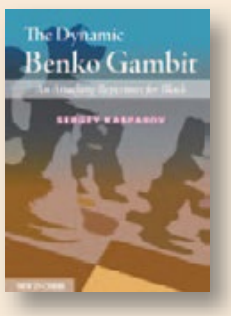

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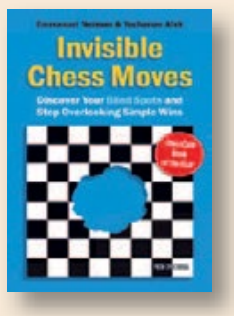

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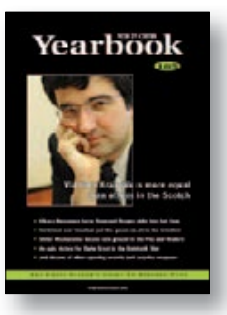

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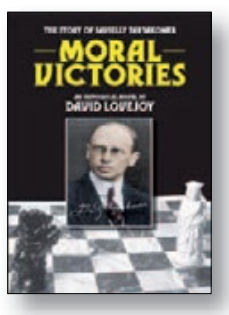

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'He's shown this before, that he is very strong against weaker players. That he can make them look really stupid. He plays very aggressively against them and punishes them. In the Candidates' it will be a different level of resistance. I think he can do extremely well there, but we'll see.'
– Magnus Carlsen on Vladimir Kramnik

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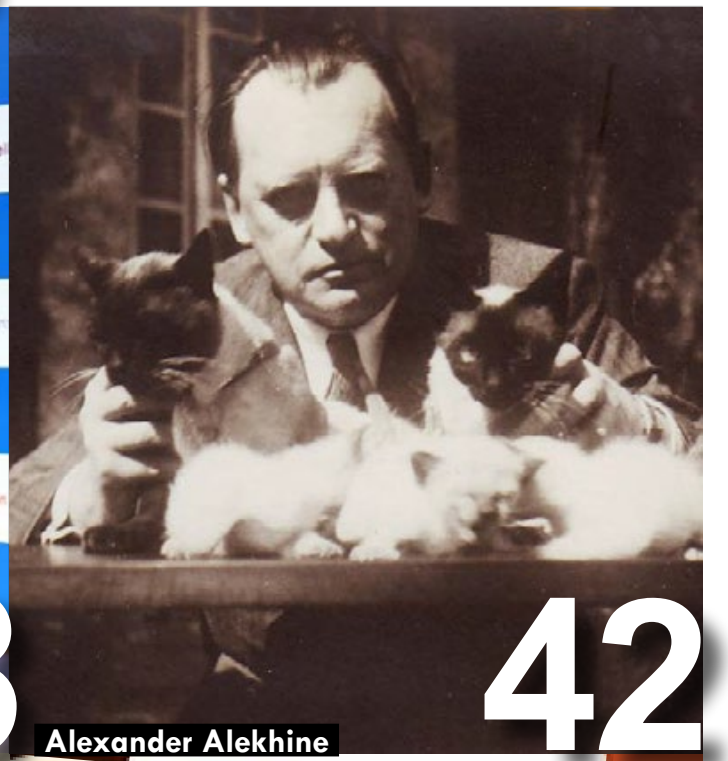

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Magnus Carlsen: New In Chess

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No place like home

Although his lacklustre performance at the London Chess Classic must have been unnerving for his fans, World Champion Vishy Anand met with unwavering support when he returned to India for a tour that was packed with highlights. Probably most honorific was his election as Indian Sportsperson of the Year 2012, ahead of, amongst other people, snooker star Pankaj Advani and cricketer Virat Kohli. At the award ceremony, which was broadcast nationwide by CNN-IBN, Anand was showered with praise

INDIAN OF THE YEAR: SPORTS
VISWANATHAN ANAND
May 2012: Won his fifth World Championship title beating Israel's Boris Gelfand in Moscow
Live
CNN IBN

In a nationwide broadcast, Vishy Anand was crowned Indian Sportsperson of the year.

and an argument was made that he was 'the most successful Indian sportsman since independence'. He is, after all, 'five-time world champion in a sport that is truly played in every nation'. Which, as one of the hosts pointed out, is in marked contrast to cricket, which is played in only nine countries and snooker in a modest 12. (To which interestingly he added as a kind of afterthought: 'football is played in Europe and a little bit in Australasia and Asia.' Eat that, Messi, Maradona and Pelé!)

The show was great promotion for chess, and Anand was a great promoter, who smilingly battled the nerdy image of our game by telling the audience that 'most chess players are actually good company'.

Anand stressed the merits of chess for schoolchildren when he inaugurated a new branch of the NIIT Mind Champions Academy at the Global Indian International School in New Delhi. 'Playing chess enhances the memory, gives confidence, teaches problem-solving, and increases concentration', he said. And if that is not enough, it also 'teaches you that all moves have consequences'. Anand set up the Academy 12 years ago, together with his sponsor NIIT. At the moment, 17,000 schools take part in the project, which counts 17 million students all over the country.

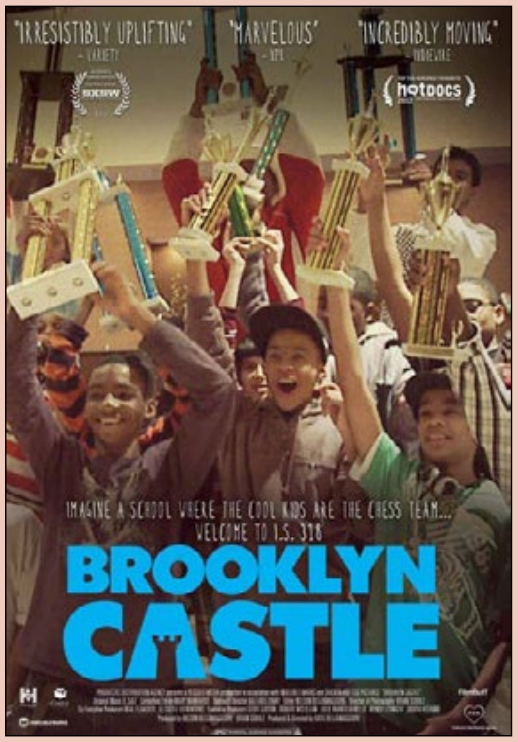
At another commitment in Mumbai, Anand was back amongst the stars again when he attended a symposium where legendary tennis champ Martina Navratilova and former West Indies cricket captain Clive Lloyd gave lectures. At the event, Navratilova was reunited with her former double partner Leander Paes from India. It was a warm and cheerful get-together and Anand had a great time when he joined the conversation.

And as always there were dozens of interviews. In one of them, given in Kolkota, the chess champ spoke warm words about Indian cricket god Sachin Tendulkar, who has been struggling with his form lately. 'Criticism is fine, but if you still like playing, it's crazy to stop for no reason. In sport there is no question that it favours young people in general. But I really want to play chess still. I am lucky to have the chance to play and I intend to use it. I imagine the same for him.' That one was for Tendulkar, but Anand's own fans must have been delighted with this personal comment on his own problems in 2012 and his ambitions for this year.

One of New York City's best

And while we're onto the benefits of chess for young kids, we should not forget to draw your attention to *Brooklyn Castle*, a documentary film that premiered early last year at the South by Southwest film festival. Since then, this remarkable film has won several festival awards, but it may not have come to a cinema near you yet. It was released late last year to a limited number of U.S. theatres, but hopefully it will find a broader audience soon.

As the official website puts it: '*Brooklyn Castle* tells the stories of five members of the chess team at a below-the-poverty-line inner city junior high school that has won more national championships than any



'Imagine a school where the cool kids are the chess team.'

other in the country. The film follows the challenges these kids face in their personal lives as well as on the chessboard, and is as much about the sting of their losses as it is about the anticipation of their victories.'

If you get the opportunity to see the film, don't miss it. See for yourself how chess transformed a school from one cited in 2003 as a 'school in need of improvement' to one of New York City's best. And how those hard-won successes threaten to be undermined by recession-driven budget cuts.

A moment of great joy

With the all-time high Elo record under his belt, Magnus Carlsen could expect to do well in his country's end of the year votes as well. And indeed, the two main Norwegian tabloids, *Dagbladet*

and *VG*, voted him Sportsman of the Year. The *Dagbladet* vote was held amongst the readers and left no questions about his popularity. Carlsen collected a third of the votes, more than the three next candidates put together. It was the second time he won the *Dagbladet* vote. The first time was in 2009, after he had conquered the number one spot in the world rankings. With two wins he finds himself in the good company of cyclist Thor Hushovd and rally driver Petter Solberg. For the moment, the record holder remains ice-skater and three-time winner Johann-Olav Koss.

In an accompanying interview Carlsen mentions his victory over World Champion Vishy Anand in 30 moves as the highlight of the year. He even calls

Magnus Carlsen, Norway's Sportsman of the Year, as he appeared in *VG*.

that win in Bilbao one of the best games in his career. 'The moment when I realized I had found the decisive manoeuvre was one of great joy.' Needless to say, the article in *Dagbladet* concludes with some optimistic speculation about further encounters with Anand in 2013.

The vote in *VG*, incidentally one of the current sponsors of Carlsen, was held among the journalists of the paper. The approach may have been slightly different, the result was very much the same.

The new reality

Magnus Carlsen's take-over of Kasparov's rating record made the publication of the FIDE world rankings on January 1st of this year a historical occasion. At 2861, the Norwegian has breached a formidable gap between him and his closest follower. Vladimir Kramnik, in second place, lags 51 points behind. Levon Aronian, who was still in second place on the previous list – separated from Carlsen by 33 points – saw the difference grow to 59 points. In seventh place, World Champion Vishy Anand has a telling 89 points fewer than the proud front-runner.

1. Carlsen (Norway) 2861; 2. Kramnik (Russia) 2810; 3. Aronian (Armenia) 2802; 4. Radjabov (Azerbaijan) 2793; 5. Caruana (Italy) 2781; 6. Karjakin (Russia) 2780; 7. Anand (India) 2772; 8. Topalov (Bulgaria) 2771; 9. Nakamura (USA) 2769; 10. Mamedyarov (Azerbaijan) 2766.

Predecessor praise

The news of Carlsen's rating record didn't come as a surprise to Garry Kasparov. With the grace of an elder statesman the 13th World Champion sent a congratulatory message to London that was read out by tournament organizer Malcolm Pein at the closing dinner of the Classic. When we talked

Garry Kasparov: happy that it didn't take Carlsen more than 13 years.

to him, Kasparov expressed his delight that his record had been broken after 13 years, which after all remains his favourite number. From his perspective it certainly sounded better than the 17 years that Fischer's 2785 record had stood, which he broke in Tilburg in 1989 by scoring a stunning 12 from 14 in an eight player double round-robin ahead of Kortchnoi, Ljubojevic, Sax and Ivanchuk. That the record would be claimed by Carlsen he had known all along: 'I knew that from the day I started working with him it was only a matter of time.'

Correction

In New In Chess 2012/8 the article on young Alexander Alekhine by Genna Sosonko ('Well, Alekhine, did you solve it?', pp.54-59) contained two mistakes that were not the author's responsibility, but rather the result of editorial inaccuracies. On page 54, the beginning of the second paragraph read: 'Alekhine's reputation as a turncoat is proverbial. According to Bernstein's account he changed sides an amazing nineteen times.' What Sosonko did write in the Russian original text was that in those turbulent days power changed hands no fewer than 19 times.

On page 56 it says: 'After the revolution, when extreme caution soon became everyone's second nature, even Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky tried to hide that he had attended the exclusive and prestigious law school in St Petersburg.' This editorial slip suggests that the author doesn't know that during the Revolution of 1917, Tchaikovsky had already been dead for 14 years. He obviously does, though. What Sosonko wrote was: 'After the revolution the attitude was extremely cautious even to Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky – a former lawyer.' (Which was followed by the sentence: 'Tchaikovsky was acknowledged as a great composer only shortly before the Second World War, when Stalin started urgently introducing Russian patriotism to the Soviet Union.') ■

Your Move

Tuna fish

I was Walter Browne's opponent in Game 1 of his terrific autobiographical games collection *The Stress of Chess*.... I thought you might be interested if I elaborate a bit on the circumstances of this tournament where Bobby Fischer performed the necessary adjudications. First of all, it was not 'a small weekend tournament' but was, in fact, the Greater New York Open, a typical six-round tournament in those days, with one game Friday night, three on Saturday, and the final two on Sunday. There were probably about 200 players competing in one section(!), with a time control of 40 moves in two hours each, and then 25 moves per hour (no sudden death then!). Walter and I played on 7 December, 1963, in round two. In those days, during a six-round NYC event, any unfinished games in rounds two, three or five had to be adjudicated after approximately five hours, so the pairings (done 'by hand') could be made and the next round begin on time. After move 52 the TD, Bill Goichberg, asked if either of us wanted an adjudication, which would have to occur soon in any event. Walter didn't, but I did because, frankly, I was afraid I was losing, but could not find a clear win for Walter, and hoped Bobby would save me! At that time, in the larger tournaments Goichberg would pay a local grandmaster, such as Bisguier or Benko, who also wasn't playing, $50 to adjudicate games on Saturday and Sunday. I was told that for this event Bobby demanded and got $100!

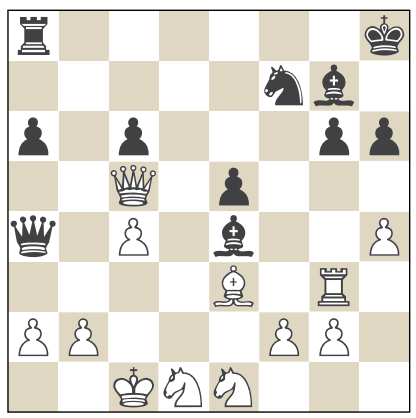
Anyway, Bobby came over to our board and asked each of us what we thought the outcome should be. I, of course, said 'draw', while Walter insisted he was winning. After looking hard for about 4-5 minutes Bobby said 'draw'. Walter was very upset and started arguing with Fischer, trying one variation after another, with Bobby refuting them all, even winning against one attempt. Finally, Bobby said to Walter 'If you keep this up, I will give the win to him', pointing at me! That quieted Walter down, although I must admit that the analysis he did 25 years later, with help from GM Ron Henley & Steve Brandwein, seems irrefutable: Black is really winning (though in Walter's book the final result of the analysis is wrongly given as '1-0').

Incidentally, I witnessed another Fischer adjudication right after ours in which two masters had reached a very blocked position, Black having eight pawns against White's seven, though with many pieces still on the board, and Black claiming a win. After looking for only 2-3 minutes Bobby said 'Black wins'. After which the fellow with white really 'lost it' and started yelling at Bobby 'You're crazy! There's no way Black can break through! You can't do this!', etc. To which Bobby calmly replied 'You wanna play this out for a hundred bucks?' He got no response. I later learned this was one of Fischer's standard replies to anyone challenging the accuracy of his analysis.

While I'm at it, I noticed Walter bemoaning the fact that he lost so many of his early game scores. Here is a game I think is quite good, though probably one Walter would rather forget! It was played in round two at the Empire City Open, New York City, on 15 October 1966. Walter (by then almost 2400) was White and I (2049) was Black.

Walter Browne-Fred Wilson
Ruy Lopez, Modern Steinitz Defence
New York 1966

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 d6 5.♗xc6+ bxc6 6.d4 f6 7.♘c3 g6 8.♗e3 ♘h6 9.dxe5 fxe5 10.♗g5 ♕d7 11.♕d2 ♘f7 12.♗e3 If 12.♗f6 then 12...♗h6!, followed by 13...0-0. **12...♗g7 13.0-0-0 0-0 14.h4 h6 15.♖h3 ♕e7 16.♖g3 ♕f6 17.♖h1 d5!! 18.exd5 ♗f5! 19.dxc6 ♖fd8 20.♘d5 ♕e6 21.♖d1 ♗e4 22.c4 ♔h8! 23.♕a5 ♕xc6 24.♕c5 ♕a4 25.♘e1 c6 26.♘c3 ♖xd1+ 27.♘xd1**



27...♖d8??? As I wrote on my score-sheet, 'At this juncture Browne had literally less than 10 seconds left and I was so confident of pushing him over the time limit that I did not *think*... and committed this atrocity. After 27...♕xa2 28.♔d2 ♖d8+ 29.♔e2 ♕b1! White can resign.' **28.♘c3 ♖d1+** Only way to save the queen. **29.♘xd1 ♕xa2 30.♕e7 ♕xc4+** and somehow I achieved a draw by repetition during the next ten moves due to Walter's incredible time-pressure (no delay or increment back then!).

I had one more short, boring draw with Walter, and one loss later to GM Browne, though curiously I seem to have mislaid this score-sheet. I am grateful that Walter described me in his truly wonderful book as having become 'a fixture on the local chess scene' and will point out that I have had my small shop specializing in vintage chess books & chess sets at 80 East 11th Street, New York City since 1979.

Lastly, I will mention that I did usually beat Walter at Scrabble and one of my fondest memories is challenging a high-scoring play he made, to the approval of many onlookers at the old 'flea house' on 42nd Street in NYC, when he threw down 'tunafish'.

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Letters may be edited or abridged

'How can you challenge tunafish?' he screamed, but was crushed to discover that this common American slang term is actually two words! Oh well, I would way rather it had been a chess game.

Fred Wilson
New York, NY, USA

Integral part

This 'letter' will be 'kurz und gut'! I just don't understand why players would propose that chess will be improved if stalemate were a win for the player delivering stalemate.

The strategy of drawing by stalemate is an integral part of the game of chess. Much of the game's richness would be lost if the stalemate rule would be changed and for what? In the classic position White: ♔e1, ♖f1 Black: ♔e4, ♕d3, why shouldn't White be able to punish Black for 1...♔e3?? with 2.♖f3+! ? Why should the strategy of drawing by leaving your opponent with a bishop and the wrong rook pawn be eliminated from the game? Then there's the technique for the side with the bishop and the wrong rook pawn for preventing the enemy king from reaching the drawing corner.

Why should the pawn races where a draw is obtained by getting a rook pawn or bishop pawn to the 7th rank after your opponent queens get swept from the game? Why should the position White: ♔e5, ♙e6, Black: ♔e7 suddenly be changed to a win for White?

The above examples of the role of stalemate in chess were just chosen off the top of my head. I'm sure there's many more. Over 20 years on I still remember how a lower-rated player saved a dead lost game with me by arranging a sacrifice for a stalemate. I was careless. He was clever. Good for him! I didn't and still don't deserve a rule saying that I should get the full point anyway!

Wayne R. Gradl
Buffalo, New York, USA

Emoticons

I have noticed of late an excess of fatuous faces in your articles such as 'Baring teeth smile' or 'Be right back' or even 'Party smile' as though language is not enough and cringe-making masks are needed. I suggest you banish these childish tricks keeping in mind that Mark Twain did not put it this way: 'The coldest winter I ever spent was one summer in San Francisco'.

Nor did George S. Kaufman write: 'I have Parkinson's Disease and he has mine'.

So please edit out these unhelpful additions and store them in the bin.

Otherwise New In Chess is the best publication of its kind I know of.

Leon Arden
London, United Kingdom

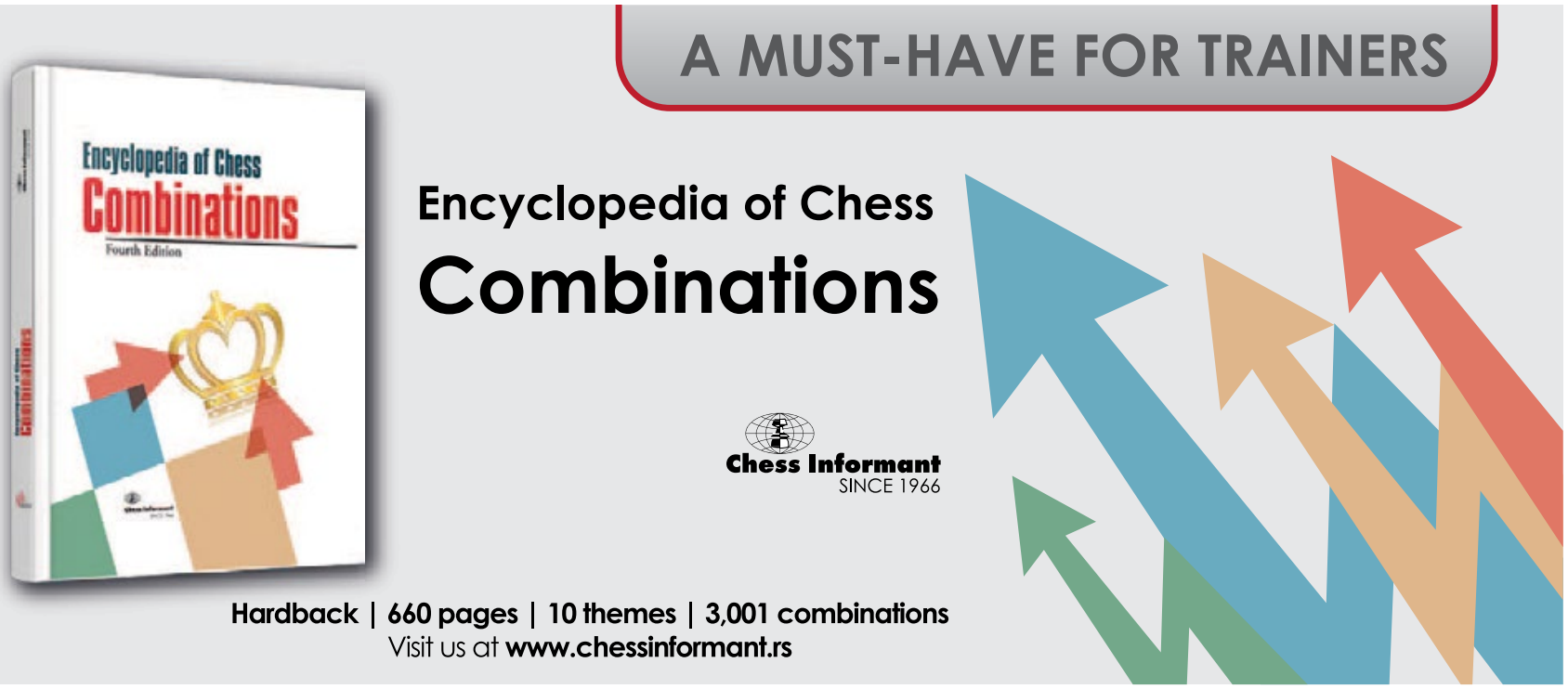
Salacious and inappropriate

I am shocked and horrified by the article 'Body and Mind Games' by Nigel Short on pp. 68 ff. of the 2012/7 issue of New In Chess. The whole article was salacious and entirely inappropriate for a chess magazine. Mr Short seems to have no morals and thinks others do not either. This is a piece of junk writing that polluted an otherwise honourable magazine! It was neither helpful nor even entertaining. If I am willing to pay $10 an issue for a chess magazine I shouldn't have to dodge foul language and prurient content.

As a result of this article I have lost trust in New In Chess. I can no longer recommend it to my students, and I wish to cancel my subscription.

Thank you for taking my opinion into consideration.

Peter Wise
Monument, CO, USA



London

Carlsen Kasparov's

We have entered the Magnus Carlsen era, if you didn't know already. With a stratospheric 2994 performance at the London Chess Classic, the 22-year-old Norwegian raised his rating to new heights to break the old record of 13th World Champion Garry Kasparov. For 13 years Kasparov's all-time high of 2851 was a proud, seemingly unreachable peak. Now the new summit of Mount Ever Best is 2861. Carlsen wasn't the only star to shine in London. Vladimir Kramnik played 'close to my best possible chess' and remained in contention for first place till the very last day. At 37, the 14th World Champion is enjoying a second youth and fastidiously preparing for the upcoming Candidates' tournament. **Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam** reports from the British capital.

London is the place to be. With one of his most memorable performances so far, Magnus Carlsen raised his rating to an all-time high of 2861. In March the successful Norwegian will return to the British capital for a new challenge, the Candidates' tournament.

surpasses record

RAY MORRIS-HILL

London

Rarely, if ever, one to lack self-confidence, Magnus Carlsen expressed his optimism to the Norwegian press on the eve of the fourth London Chess Classic. He was expecting to do well and also thinking of records. He knew that he needed to win one game at the start to take his live rating past Garry Kasparov's all-time high of 2851. He was less sure of what final score he needed to actually claim the record. 'When I calculated before the tournament, I thought that 5½ would certainly be enough, but then it turned out that I actually needed 6. Which I hadn't counted on. Maybe if I had known that I would need 6 to break the record, I would have been more nervous.'

The six points he needed were six 'classical' points, the Classic used the football scoring system again this year. As it was, Carlsen even did better. Five wins and three draws totalled 18 points which, translated into a classical score, amounted to 6½ points.

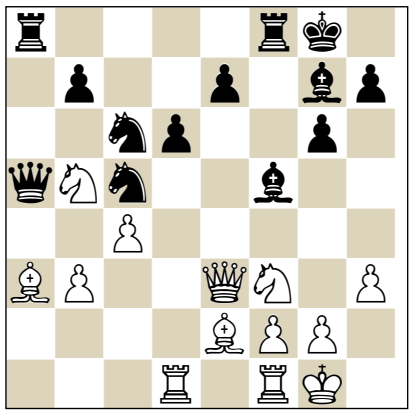
What nervousness Carlsen may have felt at the outset of the tournament must have largely vanished after he won his first two games, despite the fact that neither of them were smooth victories. Against both Luke McShane and Levon Aronian, he was worse after the opening, but his tenaciousness and resilience must have boosted his morale. 'I was pretty happy with the way I turned around the game against McShane. Obviously he made quite a few mistakes, which he had to in order for me to take over and win. But I was happy. I think I played very precisely for a very long time there. Against Aronian I didn't play very well for a long time. I got an extra pawn from the opening for insufficient compensation and from that point on I didn't do well, so he might even have got a slight advantage. But from some point on he became too ambitious and again I played quite well in the important endgame phase.'

Carlsen's tenacity and resilience in worse endgames and his precision and mercilessness in equal or slightly better endgames were a popular topic in London. His endgame prowess is well-known, but rarely was he so efficient in making the most of his chances or limiting the damage. Does he often play close to perfection? Or does he hypnotize his opponents or instil a fear in them that leads them to make mistakes they wouldn't make against others? There must be some truth in both observations, as he also admits himself. 'Yeah, possibly. It's true; I can feel that people are sometimes afraid and then I can take more chances perhaps, more risks.' To which he added with a mischievous grin: 'And also, if my opponent is not playing for a win, then regardless of the position I should be able to do it myself.'

The impact of Carlsen's endgames on his final result was such that we asked Jon Speelman, a regular guest in the VIP-room and a renowned endgame specialist, to take a closer look at the games of the tournament winner in which the final phase proved decisive. You will find Speelman's article elsewhere in this issue and, needless to say, we warmly recommend it.

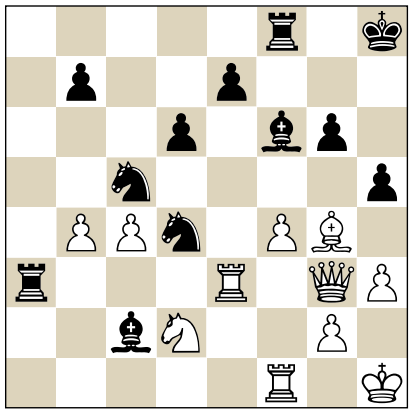
Another insight into Carlsen's endgame technique that you should not miss is Vladimir Kramnik's magnificent analysis of their draw in Round 3. At that point, both had won their first two games, and a titanic battle could be expected. Carlsen was happy that he had managed to keep his cool, but that was all the fun he derived from the game. 'I was very disappointed with the mistake I made in the opening. I didn't have any choice but to defend. My mind-set was very clear: that I didn't really mind playing passively and playing only for two results, because it was clear from a very early stage that this was the reality. With this mind-set I managed to defend very well, at least from some point on. He did have some chances, but he didn't take them, so...'

Whereas Carlsen's opening wins had been up-and-down affairs, Kramnik's wins against Judit Polgar (not exactly the first time he beat her) and Hikaru Nakamura, with black, had been superior and impressive. Still, Carlsen broke away to take the sole lead in Round 4 at the expense of Gawain Jones. The British Champion used his super-tournament debut to learn as much as possible. He had come to the praiseworthy conclusion that the best way to do so was to play full-blooded games and remain true to his enterprising style. In his encounter with the world's number one this meant nothing less than a queen sacrifice.



Carlsen-Jones
position after 18.axb3

With active play Black hasn't done badly in the opening. Now Jones spotted a temptation he could not resist: **18...♕xa3 19.♘xa3 ♖xa3** It's easy to see that Black's position contains many trumps. But he is also a piece down and his opponent is Carlsen. It didn't help either that Jones was running short of time, and slowly but surely White took the sting out of Black's initiative and won without too many problems. **20.♘d2 ♗d4 21.♕g3 ♗e5 22.f4 ♗f6 23.♗g4 ♘d4 24.♔h1 ♗c2 25.♖de1 ♔h8 26.♖e3 h5 27.b4**



27...h4 He should have tried 27...♘d3 to keep some pressure. **28.♕f2 ♘d3 29.♕g1** Now it's no longer difficult for White. **29...♘f5 30.♗xf5 gxf5 31.♘f3 ♖c3 32.c5 ♗b3 33.♘e1 ♗d4 34.♘xd3 dxc5 35.♕f2 ♖f7 36.♖c1 cxb4 37.♖xc3 bxc3 38.♕e1** Black resigned.

Jones preferred to have pleasant memories of his risky sacrifice. 'I enjoyed the game. I'm not sure my queen sac was completely sound, but I had a problem just playing these guys for the first time and was spending too much time. Just nerves. Playing on the stage, thousands of people watching, I was very tense. I hadn't experienced anything like that before. Towards the end of the tournament I got more used to it.'

By that time he also felt he had learned a lot and felt grateful for the experience of playing against the very best. 'Obviously their understanding is huge. Their repertoire, they know about basically any kind of position. Like Vladimir (Kramnik) move-ordered me out of my repertoire very cleverly. And then their concentration is very high. Generally, 90 per cent of the moves are the same for everyone from club player upwards, but here they play the computer's move for absolutely the whole game. I made one probably inaccurate move against Hikaru (Nakamura) and just had to suffer to hold the draw with white. Against Mickey (Adams) I made maybe two inaccurate moves and that was enough to lose. It's not much different from playing a computer. If you make any mistake you'll get punished for it. Normally when I am playing GMs, even around my own rating, if I make a small mistake I still have a chance to hold on in a lost position. These guys don't give you that chance.'

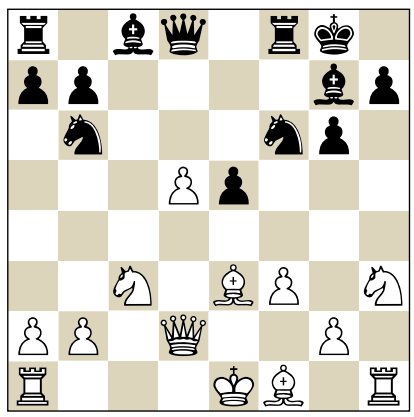
Still struggling. World Champion Vishy Anand scored his first victory in a classical game since his one classical win in the World Championship in Moscow, almost seven months ago.

NEW IN CHESS

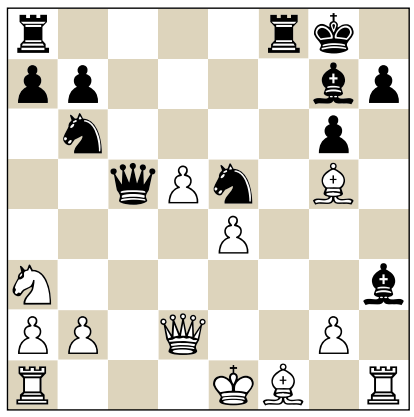
Gawain Jones also lost the next round, and although the spectators were obviously rooting for their fellow-countrymen, his loss was also greeted with some relief, as it was Vishy Anand's first victory in a classical game since his one classical win in the World Championship in Moscow, almost seven months ago.

GI 1.1 – D70
Gawain Jones
Vishy Anand
London 2012 (5)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.f3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘b6 6.♘c3 ♗g7 7.♗e3 0-0 8.♕d2 e5 9.d5 c6 10.h4 cxd5 11.exd5 ♘8d7 12.h5 ♘f6 13.hxg6 fxg6 14.♘h3



A novelty, deviating from 14.0-0-0, as was played by Anand(!) against Gelfand in their World Championship match. **14...e4** Capturing the pawn with 14...♘fxd5 15.♘xd5 ♕xd5 16.♕xd5+ ♘xd5 was also fine for Black, but Anand felt the pawn push would give him sufficient compensation. **15.fxe4 ♘g4 16.♗f4** This move was criticized. White should probably have tried 16.♗c5. **16...♘e5 17.♗g5** Another move with the same bishop that doesn't impress. **17...♕d6 18.♘b5 ♕c5** White is still a pawn up, but it's Black who is having the fun. **19.♘a3** The knight has to retreat because of the threat ...♖xf1+. **19...♗xh3**



20.♗e3 After 20.♖xh3, 20...♘bc4 decides: 21.♘xc4 ♘xc4 22.♖c1 (also losing is 22.♕c2 ♖xf1+ 23.♔xf1 ♖f8+) 22...♖xf1+. **20...♕c8 21.♖c1** White is lost. As in the game, 21.♖xh3 runs into 21...♕xh3. **21...♕g4 22.♖xh3 ♕xh3 23.gxh3 ♘f3+**

24.♔e2 ♘xd2 25.♗xd2 ♗xb2 26.♘b5 ♗xc1 27.♗xc1 For a split second the passed pawns in the centre seem to offer some compensation, but: **27...♘xd5 28.exd5 ♖ae8+ 29.♗e3 ♖xf1** White resigned.

When you look at the ease with which Anand dismantled White's position, it baffles you that he had failed to win a single classical game for so many months. Anand continued to struggle in London and described his performance as 'more or less catastrophic'. Apart from this flashy win there was little to be happy about. He is probably pinning most of his hopes on a return to good form on the hard-fought and lively games in the last two rounds against Nakamura and Carlsen. Both ended in draws, but they contained more than enough proof that Anand remains a great player. It was heartwarming to see him enthuse in the complications when he and Carlsen went through their game at the press conference.

But that was on the final day. One day after his win against Jones, Anand's relief turned to chagrin again when he lost to Mickey Adams with the white pieces. The game reached its dramatic climax after Anand had made his 41st move, a natural-looking move quickly executed after the time-control. But as the computer immediately pointed out, it was a big blunder that immediately lost the game. For minutes the spectators in the VIP-room sat staring at the screen wondering if Adams would spot the deadly blow that Anand had allowed, or whether the World Champion would miraculously be spared this further embarrassment. As he explained afterwards (and also in his notes to the game further on), Adams had seen the move at once, but kept on double-checking it, as he found it hard to believe that a player of Anand's stature could make such a mistake. 'I saw it quite fast, but then I started to become quite paranoid. My problem was that objectively it was ridiculous that bishop c4 was losing; that seemed completely unjust. I think Vishy also saw it very fast, and I could even tell this because he was staying at the board. Normally you get up in this situation. He didn't get up, which made it more obvious that he blundered something. It was sort of a stupid situation; I think everyone would have seen it.'

Adams finished in shared third place, a result he was understandably pleased with after his uncharacteristic poor performance last year. Just like then, when he was at a loss about why he had played so badly, he didn't have a clear explanation now either. 'It wasn't very different. This year we had the pairings a couple of weeks before, which I quite like because at least it motivates me to do some work. And I got a few things on the board that I had looked at, which helped. But you know, sometimes it goes well, sometimes it doesn't. I was probably just practical. Last year, things went quite well opening-wise; it was just my play that was terrible. Perhaps this year I said to myself, you have to play well and handle the clock and this is much more important than the positions you get from the openings. In general I played quite well. I wasn't even in trouble in many games. Just the game I lost against Magnus; I just completely lost control of my clock. Actually I thought I could not lose this position, which was part of the problem. I changed my mind on move 38 and that was very stupid.'

They'd burst into a duet if you'd ask them. Julian Hodgson and Stuart Conquest contributed heavily to the wonderful atmosphere in the VIP-room. 'One hundred and eighty!!'

NEW IN CHESS

As always, the VIP-room at the London Chess Classic was a wonderful place to be. While a steady supply of drinks and food kept the guests physically and mentally fit, commentators and players walked in to give their views on the games and any other subject that the ever-present anchor Julian Hodgson queried them about. This time, one of his favourite plaudits for a great move was a long drawn-out 'one hundred and eighty!' borrowed from the world of darts.

But then there were so many places at the Olympia Conference Centre where it was wonderful to be. The theatre where the games were played,

They both had hoped to do better. Judit Polgar shares a joke with Levon Aronian before they start pushing the pieces.

NEW IN CHESS

obviously, and the foyer, where visitors could play blitz against GMs, have books or programmes signed or listen to expert commentary, and of course the main commentary room, where numerous British GMs provided excellent entertainment. With nine participants, there was always one free, and he or she joined the commentators and generally spoke freely about what was going well or not so well in their tournament.

Levon Aronian, the world's number two, was among the players who disappointed. Seen as one of the pre-tournament favourites, the Armenian could not play the role he himself may have envisioned as well. Having started with two losses he managed only one win, against McShane, and had to settle for sixth place. Looking back, Aronian tried to be philosophical and preferred to see the bright side of his performance. 'For a few years I have been trying to be more relaxed about my results, trying to lose my sense of fear. And now I have completely lost it. I haven't even a bit of it left, which is the problem. So I need to find a middle way. Because it's good when you can play confidently, but you should not lose your head. Here I was going all out in almost every game, and that's a dangerous thing to do. I could have been punished even more. Actually, it's a good feeling, because I've been having this problem throughout the year. After I won in Wijk aan Zee I kind of felt obliged to play well in every tournament. Now I am calmer and more relaxed. That's one of the things I'll have to work on, on keeping my head from getting so hot.'

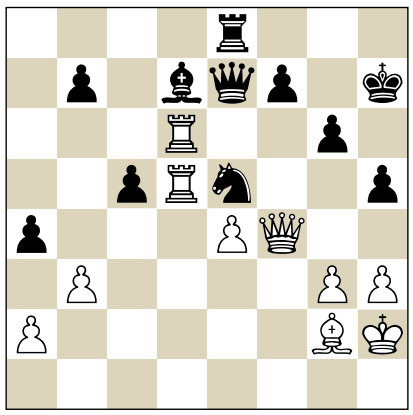
Judit Polgar had a rough time against the top finishers and was happy to have at least won a game, in the penultimate round against the luckless Luke McShane. When she arrived in London, Polgar knew that her preparation had been far from perfect. 'I was extremely busy in the two months before the event. As the main organizer of the (Polgar) festival (in Budapest) I got only four or five hours of sleep in the weeks before it started. I had too many things on my mind: the festival, writing my book, travelling to Mexico. The first week here it was mostly about sleeping and recovering and getting my brain into the right gear. In the second half I was quite reasonable, and it was nice to win a game in the end. The biggest problem was that I was playing against the best of the best guys, when even the smallest mistake will cost you. You may manage in another event, but here it is absolutely not enough. In such an event it is very important to have energy for the longer games. I had two games that were long, like Game 2 against Gawain (Jones), six and a half hours. I had not played such a long game for years, for decades!'

Levon Aronian: 'That's what I'll have to work on, on keeping my head from getting so hot.'

The First Lady remains ambitious, but understands that with her many interests and involvements she may have to make choices. 'I still want to play and enjoy it, like at the Olympiad. But as I have been in the top-10 for years, I know what it takes to be there. And I see guys like Kramnik. The board is burning, the understanding he has, it's really killing. Obviously it's not possible to do everything with my maximalist attitude. It's impossible, although I try. I have to make choices: what I find important and how much time I should invest in it. But the temptation is big to compete and to play in an event like this.'

Luke McShane is another player who knows a lot about choices. Once again he took a holiday from his work in the City, but after an unfortunate start he never came close to his excellent result of last year. 'Of course I am disappointed and I felt not too many things went my way. Certainly only getting half a point from the first four rounds felt like a pretty rough deal, considering that I had reasonable prospects in several of the games. I played some quite good chess at some moments. Nevertheless, when you play the best players of the world you sort of have to be at your best, and unfortunately I wasn't this time. Actually, I am not completely sure what I should have done. If anything, I could certainly say that I was better prepared this time than either in Moscow or here last year. But unfortunately that didn't manifest itself in the positions I got. So in that sense one can talk about a little bit of bad luck perhaps.'

McShane ended his tournament with what he called 'an atrocious blunder from a perfectly respectable position' against Nakamura.



Nakamura-McShane
position after 32.♖1d5

White is an exchange up against a pawn, but Black's position is indeed perfectly respectable and would have remained that way after **32...♗c6.** Instead, McShane blundered with: **32...♔g7?** And after **33.♕xe5+** he resigned.

This unexpected windfall lifted Nakamura to shared third place, a result that the American champion was satisfied with. 'I came here wanting to play some good chess, and with the exception of two games, probably one and a half games more or less, I felt that overall I played quite well. Two games with missed opportunities is maybe a bit much. This seems the main difference between Carlsen and the other players. It seems like every time he gets an opportunity he converts it. If a couple of breaks had gone differently, I could have won the tournament too. But still I played well and feel that I can compete and I just have to keep doing this consistently.'

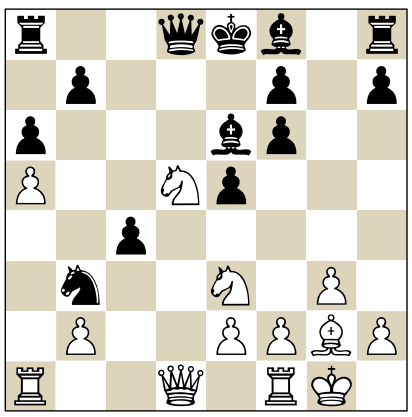
By the time Nakamura cashed in his last-round gift, it was clear that Kramnik was not going to perform the miracle he needed to catch up with Carlsen at the very last moment. With black the Russian drew his game against Adams, and as Carlsen also drew with Anand, the gap remained two football points.

Following his explosive start of 5½ out of 6, including his best effort against Polgar, Carlsen slowed down a bit in the final rounds. In Rounds 7 and 9 he played turbulent draws against Nakamura and Anand, while in Round 8 he had a bye.

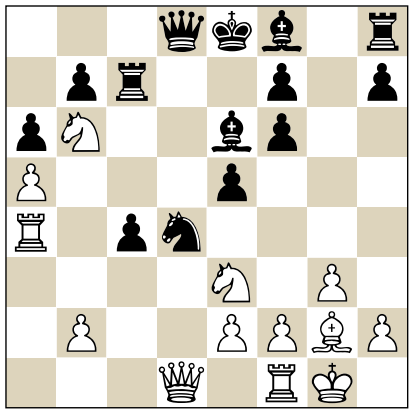
Kramnik added two more victories to his wins in Rounds 1 and 2. In Rounds 5 and 8 he disposed of McShane and Jones. His win against McShane was aesthetically most pleasing. Once he had reached a winning position, Kramnik's task was perhaps not too difficult for a player of his level, but the execution was a joy to watch.

SL 3.1 – D15
Vladimir Kramnik
Luke McShane
London 2012 (5)

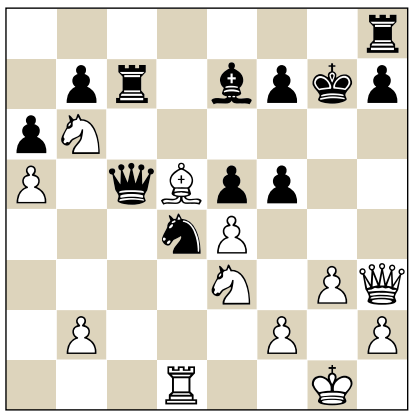
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 a6 5.g3 dxc4 6.a4 e6 7.♗g2 c5 8.0-0 cxd4 9.♘xd4 ♘bd7 10.♘c2 ♕c7 11.♗f4 Provoking Black's reply. **11...e5 12.♗d2 ♘c5 13.♗g5 ♗e6 14.♗xf6 gxf6 15.♘d5 ♕d8 16.♘ce3 ♘b3 17.a5!**



Do you want to play? **17...♖c8** Of course, 17...♘xa5 18.♕a4+ ♘c6 is a bad idea because of 19.♘xf6+, and after 19...♔e7 20.♖fd1 the game is over; and after 17...♘xa1 18.♕a4+ ♗d7 19.♕xa1 White has excellent compensation for the exchange. Kramnik also looked at 17...♗c5 18.♖a4 ♘xa5 19.♕c1 ♘b3 20.♕xc4 b5 21.♕xb3 bxa4 22.♕xa4+ ♔f8, with compensation. **18.♖a4 ♘d4 19.♘b6 ♖c7**



20.♖xc4! ♗xc4 McShane takes the exchange. Kramnik indicated 20...♗c5 21.♘bd5 ♖c8 as a better option for Black. **21.♘exc4 ♘b5 22.♕b1 ♕d4 23.♖d1 ♕c5 24.e3 ♗e7 25.♕f5 ♔f8 26.♗d5 ♔g7 27.♕g4+ ♔h6 28.e4 ♘d4 29.♘e3 f5 30.♕h3+ ♔g7**



31.♖xd4! Time to round off with a second exchange sacrifice. **31...exd4 32.♘xf5+ ♔f8 33.♕h6+ ♔e8 34.♗xf7+ ♔d8 35.♕g7 ♖f8 36.♘xd4 ♖c6 37.♘xc6+ bxc6 38.♕g4 ♔c7 39.♕d7+ ♔b8 40.♕d2** On move 40, 40.♔g2 would have been pretty annoying for Black. **40...♔c7 41.♕d7+ ♔b8 42.♔g2 ♗d6 43.b4 ♕d4 44.♕xc6 ♔a7 45.♔h3 ♕d1 46.♘c8+ ♖xc8 47.♕xc8 ♕f1+ 48.♔g4 h5+ 49.♔xh5** Black resigned.

Although he could not repeat his tournament victory of last year, Kramnik was a happy man on the final day. 'I am a perfectionist, and I am always unhappy with something in my play, but this is a rare occasion on which I am very satisfied with my play. I think I even played a bit better than last year, when I also made plus-4 and won the

It was heart-warming to see Vishy Anand enthuse in the complications when he and Magnus Carlsen went over their game in the Commentary Room with Stephen Gordon.

tournament. Maybe a few moves in my game with Anand were a bit too passive, somehow I lost track a bit, but otherwise I played fast and at a good level. I did quite a bit of work after the Olympiad, on my physical shape, my chess, psychology. And I have the feeling that it is paying off: my chess is getting better, I am not so tired after the game, I don't make big blunders, which was my problem this year. I didn't win the tournament, which would have been nice, but OK, this doesn't depend on me. Here I had the feeling that I played close to my best possible chess. If that is not enough, it's not enough. You have Magnus Carlsen, what can I do? I expected that things would go well because I had worked very seriously and consistently, but I didn't expect that it would go so well.'

Kramnik readily admitted that Carlsen was the deserved winner, but saw no reason to be gloomy about his own chances in the Candidates'. 'Magnus is clearly the best player now, that's true, but from another point of view, it's my personal feeling, I don't feel there is a huge gap between him and the others. I still have a positive score against him in classical chess, plus-1, and when I play him, it's very equal. I have better positions quite often and it's not easy for him. I feel that in our personal encounters a fight is always on the cards.

'In general he is much more stable than any other player. Plus other qualities that I can name. He is incredibly strong, he has a bit more energy, more motivation, more flexibility. Which is very important, especially in a tournament. He can play many openings depending on his opponents. Of course, he is also a little bit lucky, but that's just a small part of it. But I believe that if this little part of luck was on my side next time, and if I maintain the level of play I showed here, then I will be able to do it. I don't think it's been decided who will win the Candidates', although it is true that he is the main favourite.

'In our game here I was very confident, and at some point I thought I was winning already. He got into serious trouble but he found only moves all the time, and I could never get in the final decisive blow. I was quite close, but he defended incredibly well.'

In the past year Kramnik had no general complaints about his play. His main worry was the amount of blunders that he committed, mostly because of tiredness. The first signs of improvement give him confidence. 'I did a lot of sport, and I had a massagist here. I am taking it very seriously. At my age, I already have a handicap compared to the younger players, so I need to be at the top of my physical abilities. It's still less than Magnus's average, because he is 22, but it's my only chance to win the Candidates'; to be in top physical shape at this age. It's not a guarantee, but an absolute condition.

'I had three massages a day: before the game, after the game and in the evening. He is probably going to work with our national team. I'm like a guinea pig, the first chess player he worked with. The federation gives me very generous support, I am very grateful. They pay the team of my trainers, the massagist. They are really helping me. Of course I cannot guarantee that I will win, as there is Magnus, not to mention the others, but I feel I have a moral obligation to do everything I can to try and use my chances.'

Vladimir Kramnik: 'I had three massages a day: before the game, after the game and in the evening.'

Magnus Carlsen agreed on Kramnik's evaluation of the Russian's play in London, but added a footnote concerning his chances in the Candidates'. 'He played very well. He's shown this before, that he is very strong against weaker players. That he can make them look really stupid. He was merciless against the English players. He also beat Nakamura with black and

he always beats Judit. He plays very aggressively against them and punishes them. In the Candidates' it will be a different level of resistance. I think he can do extremely well there, but we'll see.'

Carlsen also agreed with Kramnik that Aronian's performance in the Classic need not say much about his chances in the Candidates'. 'He's just playing badly. I don't think he is hiding that much. He'll be back and I think the Candidates' is quite a different field from what it is in London, because there are no significantly lower-rated players. And Aronian has shown before that he can beat almost anyone.'

Despite his stellar performance, Carlsen was critical of his own play, particularly in the early rounds. 'Frankly, none of my first four games or five games even, from which I gained 4½ points, were particularly good. I played very well for stretches of games, I put pressure on my opponents, but I also made some silly mistakes. Which is kind of similar to what I did in Sao Paulo, but there it netted me far fewer points.'

Obviously, he was delighted with his rating record, although here, too, he preferred to keep a sober view. 'It doesn't necessarily signify that I am the best of all time. I don't really care much about that. Maybe we will discuss that 20 or 25 years from now. But it means that right now I am, rating-wise, in terms of general performing, steady at a very high level. I am quite a bit ahead of my opponents. If, let's say, Lev was at 2840 and Kramnik was at 2830 and Vishy or somebody else would be at about the same rating, it wouldn't be that significant. And, of course, it's a big deal to break Garry's record. I don't know about you, who was around back then, but I didn't think anyone would break it very soon.'

The considerable difference between Carlsen and his closest rivals was also hailed as a major achievement by Nigel Short, who had happily changed his role of Classic participant for that of commentator. According to him, that gap is what counts and not the actual figure, as according to him there is an inflation of 4 points per year. It isn't a subject that gets Carlsen in raptures. 'I am not going to talk about inflation, because I don't know anything about that. (What Short said) was frankly a little bit strange to me; he was presenting it as a fact, although I, for one, didn't know about it. I didn't know that it was considered a scientific fact. It really sounded more like an opinion to me.'

The inflation aspect was also dismissed by Aronian, when he was asked to comment on what seem to be his two main rivals in the Candidates'. 'Kramnik was playing very good chess, and Magnus was very confident and playing well, too. But when it comes to chess, Kramnik was playing better. It's very impressive that somebody can beat Kasparov's record, which nobody thought anybody would be able to do for a long time. It's a huge achievement. (With a smile) As they would have said in Soviet times, not just for us, but also for humanity. (Talking about inflation) sounds like in the old days the ball was different, the game was different. Obviously, but it is still one of the biggest achievements in chess.'

For Carlsen his new record is not only a milestone in his career, it's also a stepping-stone. 'It does mean that I have to score a whole lot of points just to keep my rating. I have had many decent results but not many of them have been 2860+, and now I will have to do this in every tournament.'

And it was you who said last year that your aim was to get to 2900.

'I think it's possible, but I'll have not only to keep on going the way I have been, but also to take my game to a new level. Which I believe I can do. And which, frankly speaking, I feel I haven't done for a while. I think my rating has been trying to catch up with me for a while and now I have to take a new step.'

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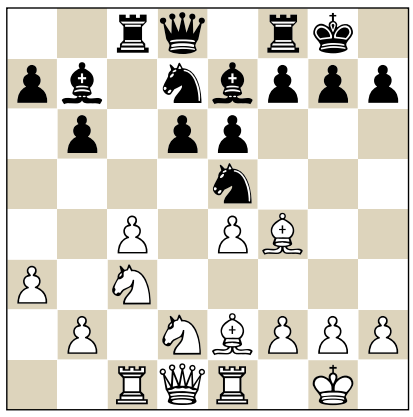
NOTES BY
Ian Nepomniachtchi

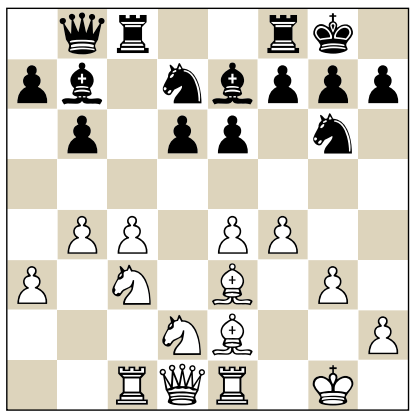
EO 33.9 – A33
Magnus Carlsen
Judit Polgar
London 2012 (6)

1.c4
Not long ago in Mexico, Polgar defeated Magnus with black in a double-edged King's Indian position. It is no secret that Judit is especially dangerous when she obtains active play, and therefore the idea of dragging the opponent into the viscous structures of the English Opening looked very attractive.
1...c5
In the first round against Kramnik, Polgar tried 1...♘f6, but she played the opening in a simple manner and was soon forced to throw caution to the winds. With the move in the game Judit effectively rejects the various set-ups with ...g6.
2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e6

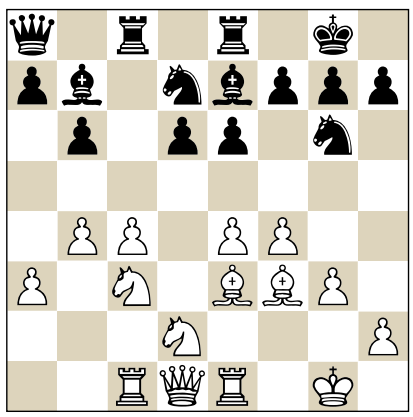
In recent times the English 'hedgehog' has been considered very comfortable for Black. Nevertheless, Black has to make a number of accurate moves on emerging from the opening, in order to count on full equality and not end up in a persistently inferior position.
6.a3 ♗c5
To me 6...♗e7 seems sounder, but, as they say, this is a matter of taste.
7.♘b3 ♗e7 8.e4 0-0 9.♗e2 b6 10.0-0 ♗b7 11.♗f4 d6 12.♖c1 ♖c8 13.♖e1 ♘e5 14.♘d2 ♘fd7



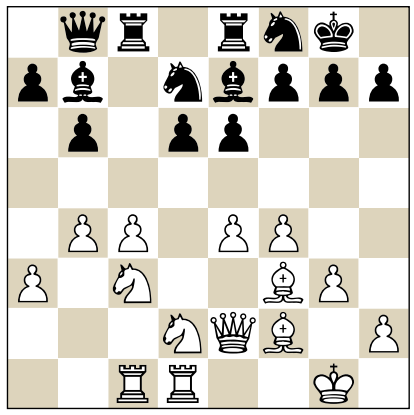
15.♗e3 To me this new move seems more flexible that 15.b4, as Van Wely played against Gashimov in Wijk aan Zee 2012.
15...♕c7 In a similar position from the afore-mentioned game, Vugar carried out a different plan: 15...g5, seizing space on the kingside and averting a bind over the entire board.
16.b4 ♕b8 17.f4 ♘g6 18.g3



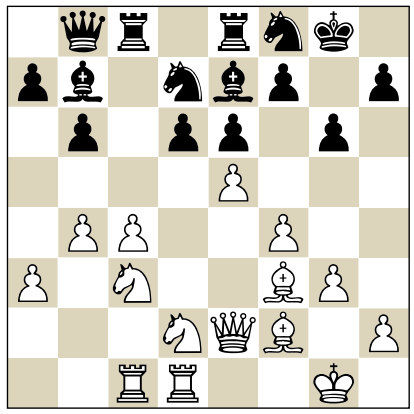
White has stabilized the pawn structure in the centre and, having prevented various breaks, he can count on a pleasant advantage.
18...♖fe8 19.♗f3 ♕a8



For the moment Judit has not taken a single illogical decision, and the black position has no weaknesses. However, here Black must wait and if possible avoid any positive actions, and this in no way corresponds to the chess Amazon's creative credo ☺.
20.♗f2 ♘gf8 21.♕e2 ♕b8 22.♖ed1

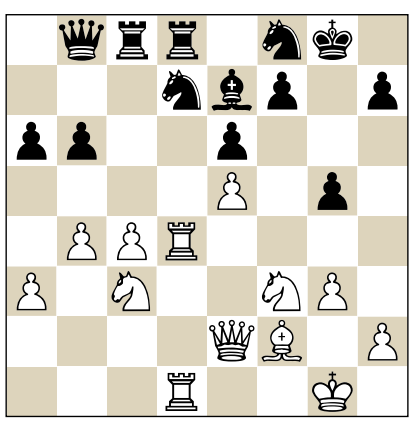


22...g6? The idea of this move is not easy to understand, whereas its drawbacks, by contrast, are obvious: now the black knights are very passive and are duplicating one another, and the knight on f8 has altogether no legal moves. In addition, the e4-e5 advance will fix the weakness of the f6-square and it is not liable to lead to the loss of the pawn: there is no way to attack it a third time! The g6-square would have come in very useful...
23.e5! Such opportunities must not be missed.



23...♗c6?!
Apparently upset by her previous unfortunate move, Judit decided to consolidate her position as much as possible, but this delay can only aggravate Black's problems.
She should have either developed her f8-knight by 23...dxe5 24.♗xb7 ♕xb7 25.fxe5 h5 and relied on the impregnability of her defences, or thrown

caution to the winds and initiated sharp play, exploiting the comparative weakness of the e5-pawn: 23...♗xf3 24.♘xf3 dxe5 25.fxe5 g5!? (releasing the knight from imprisonment) 26.♖d4 ♖ed8 27.♖cd1 a6.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

It is important not to allow the white knight to go to d6, and after, for example, 28.♕e3 h6 29.h4 ♕c7 by some miracle Black continues the fight.

24.♗d4 ♖ed8 25.♗xc6 ♖xc6

26.♘f3

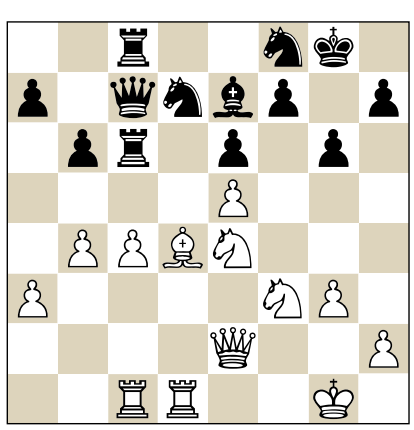
A move made on general grounds, which retains a comfortable plus.

More concrete play was possible: 26.exd6 ♖xd6 27.♘f3 ♖c6 28.♘e4 ♕a8 29.♗a1 a5 30.♕b2, and after 30...f6 Black is substantially worse, although still with a quite solid position.

26...dxe5 27.fxe5 ♖dc8

Again variations of the ideas with ...g5 and ...♘g6 or ...h6/...h5 and ...♘h7 look, at the least, more interesting.

28.♘e4 ♕c7

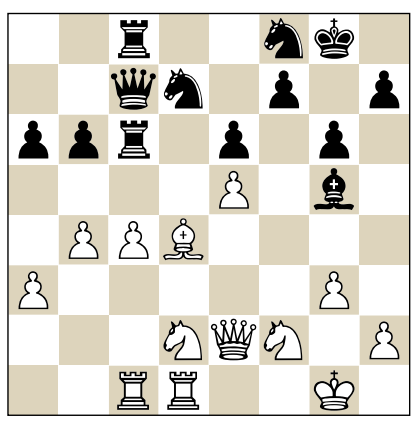


29.♘fd2 29.♕f2 ♖xc4 30.♖xc4 ♕xc4 31.♘fg5 ♗xg5 32.♘xg5 looked strong, but with the move in the game White avoids any simplification and maintains the pressure.

29...a6 30.♘f2

The knight is aiming for g4, and now it would seem that God himself should order that ...h5 followed by ...♘h7 be played! But Judit stubbornly rejects this advance. And now she goes in for a lengthy forced variation, which leads to a hopeless ending for Black.

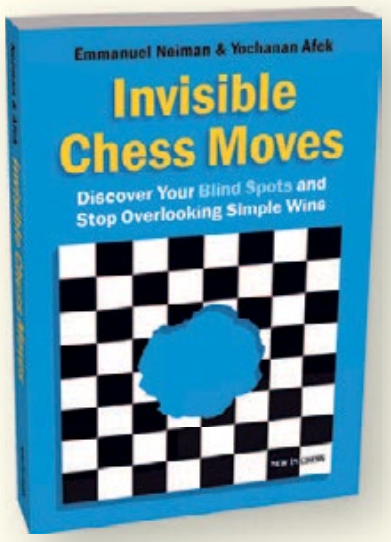
30...♗g5?



31.♖f1! Black's position is about to crumble. **31...♗xd2** It is even embarrassing to recommend 31...f5.

32.♕xd2 ♘xe5 32...♖xc4 33.♖xc4 ♕xc4 34.♘g4 looks depressing.

33.♗xe5 ♕xe5 34.♘g4 ♖d6 35.♘h6+ ♔g7 36.♖xf7+ ♔h8 37.♕f2 ♕d4



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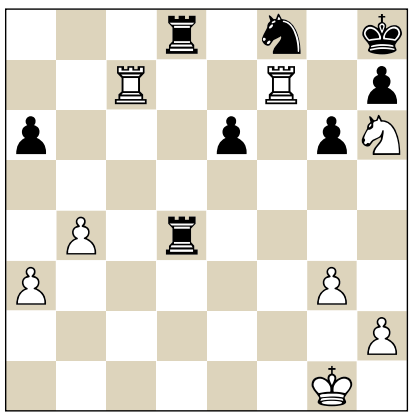
The smoke has cleared. Material is equal, but Black's stalemated kingside kills any intrigue. It only remains for White to choose the most accurate way of converting his advantage, and Magnus manages this without difficulty.

38.c5

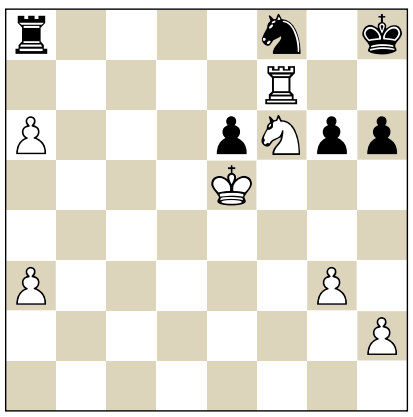
38.♖f1 ♘d7 39.♕xd4+ ♖xd4 40.♖e7 ♘e5 41.♘f7+ ♘xf7 42.♖fxf7 leads to a rook ending, and these, in the well-known expression of one of the classical authors, are always drawn! ☺

38...bxc5 39.♕xd4+ ♖xd4 40.♖xc5 ♖cd8 41.♖cc7



The rest is a matter of technique.

41...♖d1+ 42.♔g2 ♖1d2+ 43.♔h3 ♖2d5 44.♘g4 ♖h5+ 45.♔g2 ♖d2+ 46.♔f3 ♖f5+ 47.♔e3 ♖xf7 48.♖xf7 ♖d8 49.♘f6 ♖b8 50.♔f4 h6 51.♔e5 a5 52.bxa5 ♖a8 53.a6



Black resigned in this picturesque position.

After Magnus's rather uneven play in the first half of the tournament it was extremely important to play a pure, classical game.

NOTES BY
Vladimir Kramnik

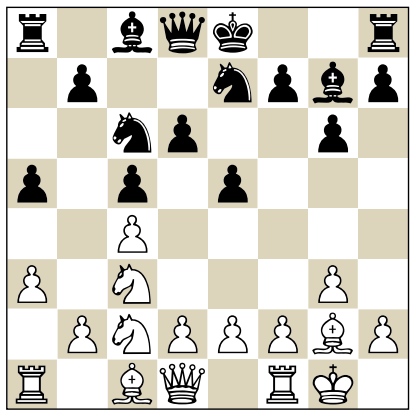
EO 28.11 – A37
Vladimir Kramnik
Magnus Carlsen
London 2012 (3)

When you win four games out of eight in a tournament, it may look a bit strange to annotate a long game that ended in a draw, but to my mind this game against Magnus is more educational for the reader. Several interesting moments occur, and there are positions that are significant for endgame theory. Moreover, the game is also important because we were one and two in the tournament and because it was played at a key moment, in Round 3, after we both had won our first two games.

1.♘f3 c5 2.c4 ♘c6 3.♘c3 e5 4.g3 g6 5.♗g2 ♗g7 6.0-0 ♘ge7 7.a3 a5 8.♘e1 d6

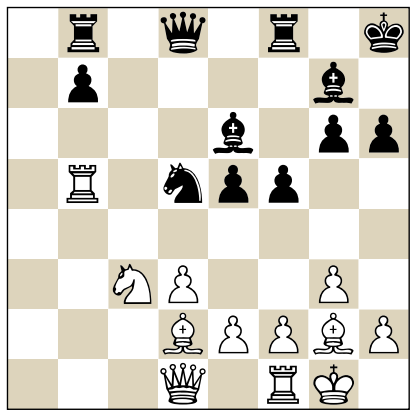
I think my opponent's opening choice was influenced by his second Ian Nepomniachtchi. I don't remember Magnus playing it before, but Ian plays this regularly. Against me alone he has already played the set-up with 1...c5, 2...♘c6 and 3...e5 twice. But they probably didn't spend too much time on it, as Magnus mixed up moves a bit further on.

9.♘c2



9...0-0 While analysing this game, I checked my database to find relevant games, and much to my surprise I discovered that I had already played this line in a rapid game against Boris Gelfand in Nice in 2008, a game I had completely forgotten about. Even more bewildering was the fact that the motif with 18.♖b5, which I used in this game and which I was proud to have found, had already occurred in that game. This is funny, but it is also scary, since my memory is apparently not improving with the years.

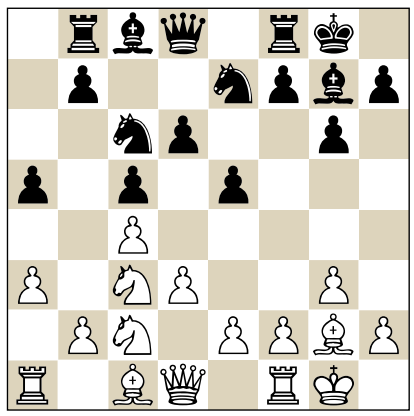
In that game Boris played more accurately: 9...♗e6 10.♘e3 0-0 11.d3 f5 12.♘ed5 ♔h8 13.♖b1 h6 14.♗d2 ♖b8 15.b4 axb4 16.axb4 ♘xb4 17.♘xb4 cxb4 18.♖xb4 d5 19.cxd5 ♘xd5 20.♖b5



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

If you compare this position with the one I reached against Magnus after 18.♖b5, you can see that here I am about two tempi down, and now Boris could play a move that Magnus didn't have at his disposal: 20...e4! and after 21.♘xd5 ♗xd5 I was still pressing a bit, but finally Boris was able to make a draw without too many problems.

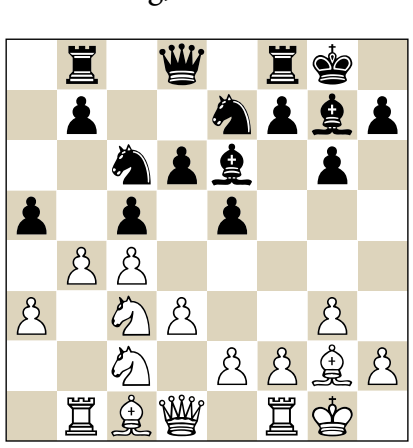
10.d3 ♖b8 Here Magnus mixes up the moves. He had probably prepared 10...♗e6 11.♘e3 ♖b8 12.♘ed5, about which there is a lot of theory, and at the board he believed he could play more accurately, assuming that I would play ♘e3 anyway.



11.♖b1 But I have this move, which saves me the move ♘e3 and allows me to push b4 immediately. The text-move would not make much sense if I played it after 10...♗e6 in the previous note, as Black would equalize with 11...d5. That's the difference. I've played this position many times already. There are many slight differences in move order and other nuances. It looks as if Black is always doing the same thing against anything White does, but this is not true.

After 11.♘e3 Black can either continue with 11...♗e6 or go for 11...♘d4.

11...♗e6 12.b4 I could also have played 12.♘e3, of course, but I saw nothing wrong with this immediate push. The only reason I thought a bit about this move, was that I was wondering if this was Magnus' preparation, as he played fairly quickly. Now he started thinking, which was reassuring.



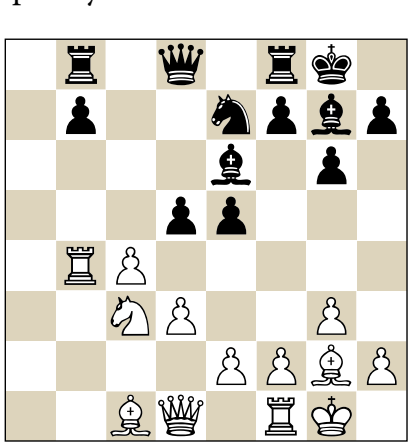
12...axb4

It's usually difficult for White to push b4, since Black is almost always in time to meet it with ...d5 (or play ...d5 even before White pushes b4).

I believed that 12...b6 was slightly safer, when I intended 13.bxc5 bxc5 14.♖xb8 ♕xb8 15.♗g5 and playing along the b-file. The opening is not a success for Black here, but it's not a disaster either. Magnus' decision to exchange everything on b4 and then go 15...d5 is consistent, but it's also risky, since White has a considerable initiative on the queenside and if something goes wrong, it really goes wrong.

13.axb4 cxb4 14.♘xb4 ♘xb4 15.♖xb4 d5

Here I thought for about half an hour. There were various interesting ways to develop my initiative, but somehow I didn't find anything that satisfied me completely.

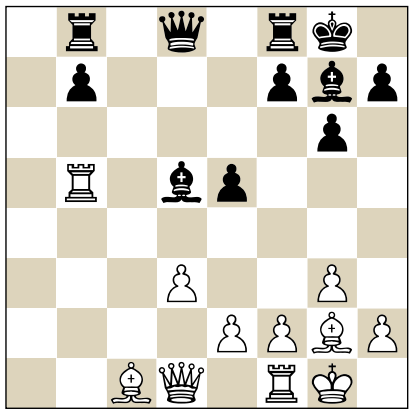


16.cxd5

The first move I looked at was the natural 16.♕b3, which exerts a lot of pressure on Black's queenside, but after 16...dxc4 17.dxc4 ♘c6!, about the only move, it appears that Black will hold quite easily: 18.♖xb7 ♖xb7 19.♕xb7 ♘a5 20.♕b5 ♘xc4 21.♘d5 ♘d6 22.♕c5 ♘f5, and although White retains a slight initiative thanks to the d5-square, it's not enough to win the game.

I thought about 16.♗a3 ♖e8 17.♖a4 for a long time. This is one of many possible moves, and it was also suggested by Magnus in the post-mortem. After 17...dxc4 18.dxc4 White is slightly better, but not more than that.

16...♘xd5 17.♘xd5 ♗xd5 18.♖b5!



This was the move that made me decide on 16.cxd5, and when I saw it, I was happy. However, as I already

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indicated, it was not a real discovery! If Black manages to play ...b5 and protect the pawn, White has no advantage whatsoever, so the pawn has to be blocked on b7 or b6.

18...♗xg2

I think this was a mistake that puts Black in quite serious trouble and Magnus wasn't too happy about it either after the game. With this ambitious move Black hopes to solve his problems right away by exchanging pieces and trying to push ...b5. But if it doesn't work there are clear shadow sides.

Better was 18...♗c6, when Black will also find himself in an unpleasant position, but he will be only slightly worse: 19.♗xc6 bxc6 20.♖c5 (the computer prefers exchanging a pair of rooks: 20.♖xb8 ♕xb8 21.♕c2 ♖c8 22.♗e3 with some torture for Black, but I believe that with only one rook it will be very difficult to win, as a possible penetration to Black's seventh rank would be much less effective) 20...♕d7 21.♕c2 ♖bc8 (the computer's more active suggestion 21...♖b6 is probably better, trying to double rooks and find counterplay on the b-file) 22.♗e3 ♖fe8 23.♖c1 ♖e6, when White puts pressure on the c-pawn but has no concrete plan for capturing it, so he should probably go 24.♖a5 and see if he can penetrate on the seventh rank. Black's position is annoying, but it should be tenable.

19.♔xg2 ♕d7 20.♕b3 ♖fc8 21.♗b2

And not 21.♗d2, when Black has the trick 21...♖c2 and manages to unblock his position.

Vladmir Kramnik: 'When he played it, I was amazed. It almost looks like resignation, as Black seems to pass, but as it turned out there is no more for White than what I managed to squeeze in the game.'

21...♕d6

Played with a heavy heart. This was obviously not the move he had intended.

The problem is that after the move that Magnus had planned, 21...♕c6+, White has the subtle 22.♔g1 (after 22.f3 ♕c2 the attack on e2 should give Black a draw), and after 22...♕c2 23.♕xc2 ♖xc2 24.♗xe5 he had forgotten that the rook on b8 is hanging, so that after 24...♗xe5 25.♖xe5 the pawn on e2 is protected and after 25...b5 26.♖b1 b4 27.♖b3 it looks as if Black has some counterplay, but in fact he has to come up with something miraculous to stay in the game.

So, 18...♗xg2 was a positional mistake, not because Magnus doesn't understand chess, but because of a calculating error in a long line. This often happens: you see a move that is positionally dubious, but works tactically. But if it turns out that it doesn't, everyone is pointing their finger at you.

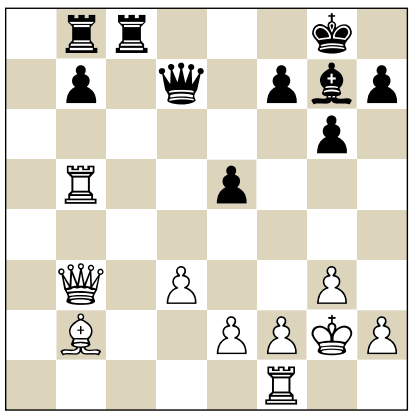
22.♖b1 It would be a bit harsh to call this human move a mistake, but it's slightly inaccurate.

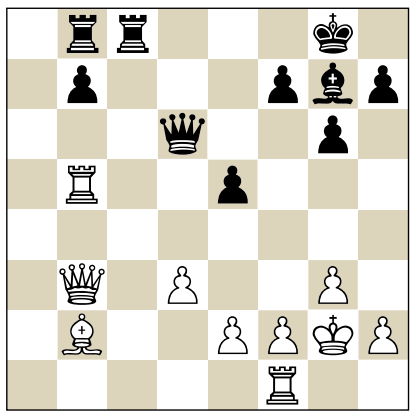
Better was 22.♖b6, when after 22...♕d7 I had underestimated the strength of 23.♖c1 (my reasoning was that unless I could take the b7-pawn without any complications, it would be better to postpone exchanging and to keep two pairs of rooks on the board. Therefore I had been looking at 23.♖b1, when Black has 23...♖c6 24.♖b5 ♖e6 and at best I will end up in a 4 vs 3 endgame which will not be enough, especially not against this opponent) 23...♖xc1 24.♗xc1 and this position is not lost for Black, but certainly unpleasant. For instance, after 24...♖c8, 25.♖xb7 works because after 25...♕c6+ 26.f3 the bishop cannot be taken, as the pawn on f7 is hanging.

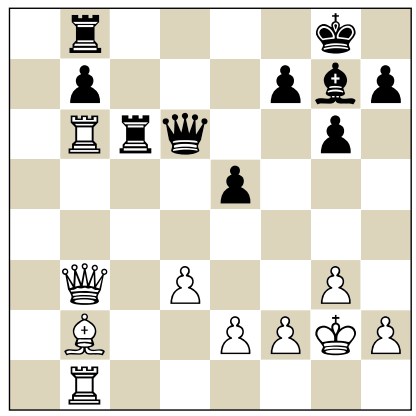
22...♖c5

Active play. He could have tried 22...b6, but it's better to strive for ...e4 and try to reach a 4 vs 3 ending.

23.♖b6 ♖c6



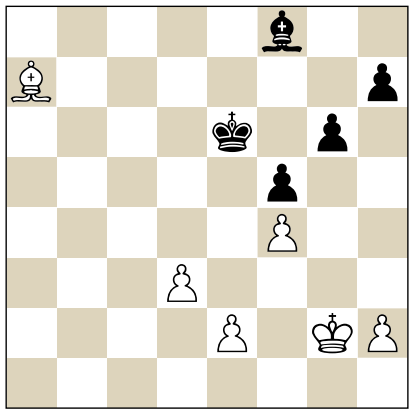




24.♖xb7

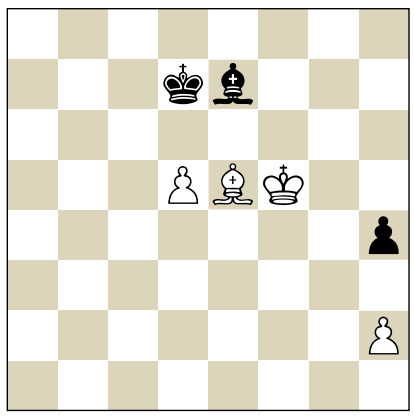
Played with my 27th move in mind. There was an important alternative which would highlight a theoretically important ending.

The easy way to win a pawn was 24.♗a3. You cannot analyse such a move till the end, but my general feeling was that it was quite drawish. By coincidence, that evening I happened to go to the same restaurant as Magnus and we analysed the bishop ending that would arise. He found the best way to play it, which would allow Black to draw, but by the smallest of margins. When I returned to the hotel, I analysed it further and found that the method he had proposed was correct: 24...♖xb6 25.♗xd6 ♖xb3 26.♖xb3 ♖d8 27.♗c7 ♖d7 28.♖xb7 ♗f8 – an annoying resource, because now I cannot unpin with the ♖b8 check. In fact I have nothing better than exchanging rooks, because Black wants to play ...f5, ...♔f7 and ...♗d6 – 29.f4 exf4 30.gxf4 f5 31.♖a7 ♔f7 32.♗b6 (as ...♗c5 was the threat) 32...♖xa7 33.♗xa7 ♔e6



ANALYIS DIAGRAM

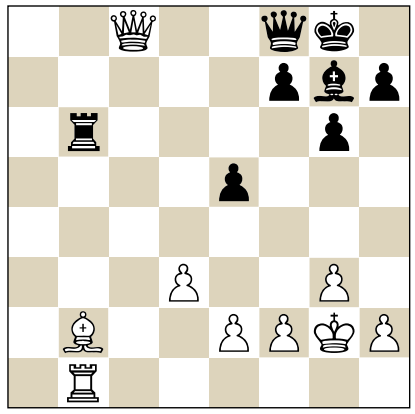
This is quite an important bishop ending. In my first calculations I believed it was drawish, but there is a white plan: to play e4 and then take back with the king on e4: 34.♔f3 ♗d6 35.e4 ♗e7 36.d4 fxe4+ 37.♔xe4 ♗d6 38.d5+ ♔d7 39.♗d4 h5 40.♗e5 ♗e7 41.f5 gxf5+ 42.♔xf5 h4.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

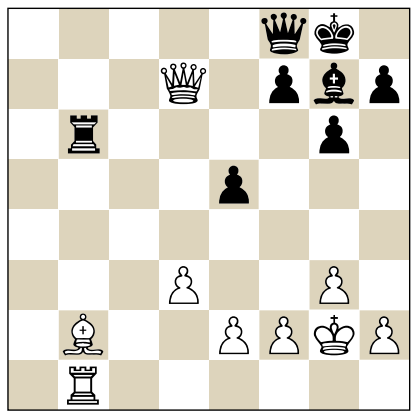
The position we unavoidably have been going for. This looks quite scary for Black, especially with the pawn on h4, but as it turns out he is always in time to save the draw: 43.h3 (after 43.♗f4 Black plays 43...h3 and makes a draw after 44.♔g4 ♗d6, and all pawn endings are drawn) 43...♗d8, and Black just stays. He can keep the bishop on d8 or even play it round to e1: 44.♔g4 ♗e7 45.♗f4 ♗d8 46.♗g5 (the only plan for White in this position) 46...♗a5, and Black will be in time to take the pawn on d5: 47.♗xh4 (on 47.♔f5 Black plays 47...♗e1) 47...♔d6 48.♔f5 ♔xd5 49.♗f6 ♗e1, and the h-pawn is stopped (if it was on h5, I believe it would be winning for White).

24...♖xb7 25.♕xb7 ♖b6 26.♕c8+ ♕f8



27.♕d7!

This was the move I had seen and that I was quite happy about. I am not threatening anything, in fact, but on the other hand Black cannot make use of the pin on the b-file for the moment. I checked carefully if I was not going to lose anything and believed that if I could safely unpin myself I should be winning.



27...h5 This move he found by way of elimination, rejecting the lines that didn't look good for him. When he played it, I was amazed. It almost looks like resignation, as Black seems to pass, but as it turned out there is no more for White than what I managed to squeeze in the game.

Susan Polgar Chess Daily News

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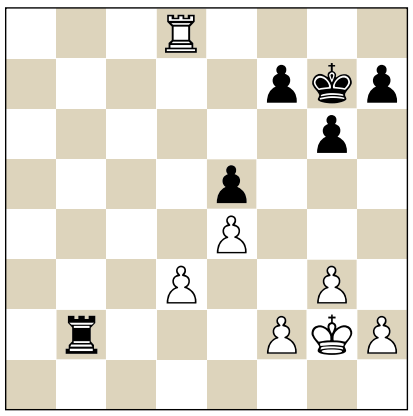
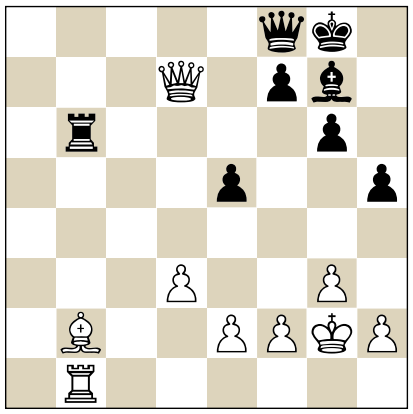
Another way to play was 27...♗f6, which gets us into another type of endgame: 28.e4 (threatening ♗a3; 28.♗xe5 ♖xb1 29.♗xf6 doesn't yield anything) 28...♕d8 29.♕xd8+ ♗xd8 30.♖c1 (an important tactical resource; otherwise I'll be pinned forever) 30...♖xb2 31.♖c8 ♔g7 32.♖xd8.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

And again we have an interesting endgame. Rook endings with 4 against 3 are an easy draw, but 5 against 4 is not easy at all. My plan was to take the king to e3 and play f4. If White were to move, I'd go h4, but as it's Black's move he can prevent this with 32...g5 33.♖d5 f6, and although White maintains some practical chances, it should be a draw.

After 27...♕a8+, 28.f3 works tactically for White: 28...♖b7 (or 28...♕b8 29.♖c1) 29.♕d5 ♕b8 30.♗xe5.



28.e4!

The only way to play for a win. White is threatening both ♗a3 and ♖c1.

28.♗a3 doesn't work because of 28...♕a8+, of course, and if White prepares the bishop move with 28.f3, Black has 28...♕b4! 29.♗d4 ♕xb1 30.♕d8+ ♔h7 31.♗xb6. Now if I manage to settle the position I'll have very good winning chances, but the problem is that he has 31...♕e1 32.e4 ♕e2+ 33.♗f2 ♗h6!, and 34.♕b6 would leave the d3-pawn hanging, and after 34.♕f6 there is nothing more than a perpetual: 34...♗e3 35.♕f7 ♔h6. For a moment I thought I was threatening 28.♖c1, but in fact after 28...♖xb2 29.♖c8 ♖xe2 I win the queen, but with four pawns on the same flank the position is just a simple draw.

28...♕d6

The right decision. After 28.e4 Magnus had to choose what kind of torture he wanted to undergo. Exchanging queens looks like the most promising option for saving the draw.

Now, after 28...♕b4 29.♗d4 ♕xb1 30.♕d8+ ♔h7 31.♗xb6, there will be no pawn hanging on e2.

White also has quite significant chances after 28...♖d6 29.♕b5 ♕d8 30.♗xe5 (or 30.♖d1 ♖b6 31.♕a5) 30...♖xd3 31.♗f4.

29.♕e8+ ♕f8

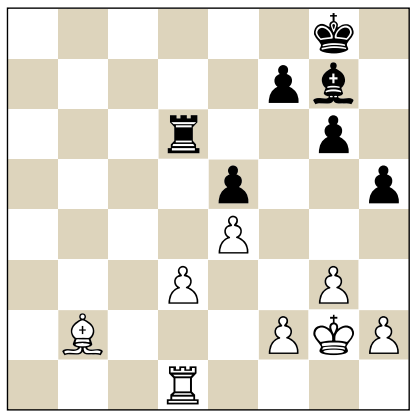
29...♔h7? 30.♗xe5 was too cheap a trick to expect him to fall for it.

30.♕d7 ♕d6 31.♕xd6

I have nothing better.

31...♖xd6 32.♖d1

This is a pity. It would be much better for me if I could defend the d-pawn with ♖b3, but the bishop stands in the way. Now we have reached another interesting endgame. I had already checked it with just bishops and just rooks, but we now have it with rooks and bishops.



32...f5

Well played. If Black stays passive, he may well end up in trouble. White has the potential threat of f4 and playing up his king. I have quite bad memories of this type of endgame (rooks and bishops of the same colour, although then it was 4 against 3), as I lost it against Leko in the fifth game of our World Championship Match in Brissago in 2004.

The text-move works perfectly. Black would not achieve the same aim with 32...g5, because White plays 33.f4 anyway, and after 33...exf4 34.♗xg7 ♔xg7 35.gxf4 gxf4 36.d4! (36.♔f3 f5!), followed by 37.♔f3 and 38.♔xf4, the rook ending is very dangerous for Black.

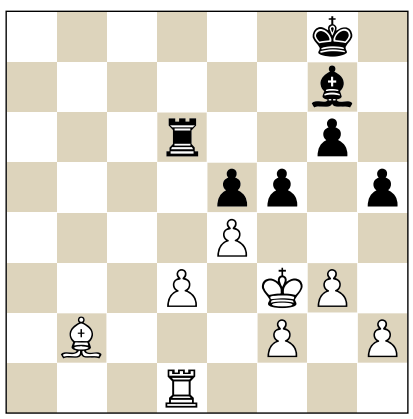
33.f3

Here I miss the last chance to play for a win.

Having arrived in London with a slight delay due to visa problems, Ian Nepomniachtchi had a great time as Magnus Carlsen's second.

NEW IN CHESS

I almost touched my king to go 33.♔f3 but then had second thoughts, because I was not sure if some of the endgames would be won. And to prevent one of them I decided to first make the 'prophylactic' 33.f3. Still, 33.♔f3 would have been best, and now:



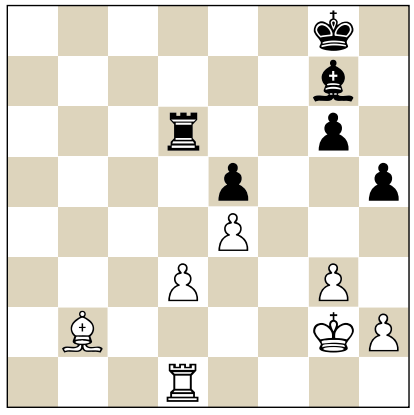
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 33...♖b6 (the only way) 34.♗c3 ♖b3 35.♖c1, and this is an improved version of the game for me. I will next play ♔e2, ♖c2, ♗d2 and my rook starts to be active and my estimate would be that I have a 50 per cent chance of winning;

B) I am winning both after 33...g5 34.♔e2 fxe4 35.dxe4 ♖xd1 36.♔xd1 g4 (here I was afraid that it might be a draw due to the reduced material, but in fact it's quite a simple win) 37.♔e2 ♔f7 38.f3 ♗f6 39.♔f2 ♔e6 40.♔g2 ♗g5 41.h3 (finally forcing him to take on f3) 41...gxf3+ 42.♔xf3 ♗f6 43.g4, and the pawn will go to h5 and the king to f5;

C) and 33...♔f7 34.♔e2 fxe4 35.dxe4 ♖xd1 36.♔xd1 (with the bishop on d6 this would be a draw, but the problem is that he is pinned) 36...♔e6 37.f4 ♗f6. After this move I believed that it was a draw, because after 38.fxe5 ♗xe5 39.♗xe5 ♔xe5 I am not in time to protect my e-pawn. But I have 38.h4! (after 38.♔e2 Black can play 38...exf4 39.♗xf6 fxg3!. This threat is removed by 38.h4!) 38...♗g7 39.♔e2. After the game one of the spectators came to me who had checked the game with a computer and told me that I could have won with 33.♖e1, and I realized it must be the first line of Houdini. However, after 33...♖xd3 34.exf5 gxf5 35.♗xe5 ♔f7 we get a 2 against 3 ending that is a very easy draw. Another example that spectators should not blindly rely on Houdini's assessment.

33...fxe4 34.fxe4



34...♖b6! This I had missed. Magnus defended incredibly well in this game. Once he got into trouble, he was making all the best moves; sometimes not even the first choices of the computers but better moves.

35.♗c3

I had hoped to put my king on e2 and slowly improve my position, but I will simply not be in time.

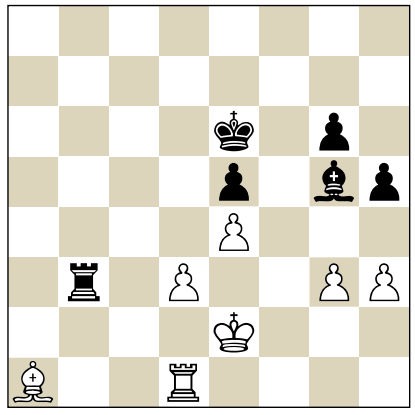
For instance, after 35.♖d2 ♖b3 36.♔f2 he has 36...♗h6! 37.♖c2 ♖xd3 38.♗xe5 and now after 38...♖d2+ 39.♖xd2 ♗xd2 he puts his king on e6, and it will be a draw.

35...♖b3 36.♗a1

Disappointed I played this move which doesn't bring anything. I was considering to push d4 and play the rook ending with the extra e-pawn.

I should at least have tried 36.♖c1 ♔f7 37.♔f3 ♔e6 38.♔e2 ♗h6 39.♖c2.

36...♔f7 37.♔f3 ♔e6 38.h3 ♗h6 39.♔e2 ♗g5



40.♖g1

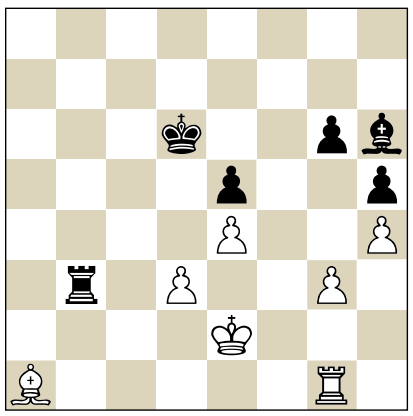
My problem remains the bad positions of my two pieces. If I managed to activate my rook I might get chances.

40...♗h6 41.h4

Hoping to play g4 and get my rook

active on the kingside. The black rook should stay on b3. If he moves it to a3, I have ♖b1 and handing me the b-file can be quite dangerous for Black.

41...♔d6 More precise was 41...♔f6, as he played later, when we returned to this position.

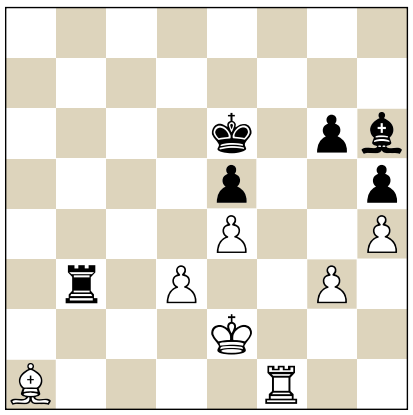


42.♖d1

I should have taken my last chance to play 42.g4, although it's quite a simple draw: 42...♗f4 43.gxh5 gxh5 44.♖g6+ ♔d7 45.♖a6 ♖b1 46.d4 exd4 47.♗xd4 ♗g3 (just in time) 48.♗f6 ♖h1 49.e5 ♗xh4 50.e6+ ♔c7 51.e7 ♖e1+ 52.♔d2 ♗xf6 53.♔xe1 ♗xe7, and it's a draw.

42...♔e6 43.♖f1

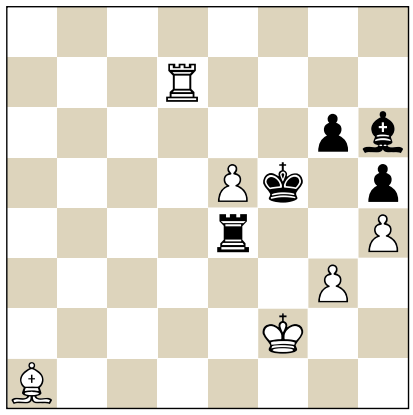
I believed I had put him into some sort of zugzwang, but Magnus played a very strong move, stopping me from playing d4 and essentially ending my hopes of playing for a win.



43...♖b4! After 43...♗g7 I can activate my rook with 44.♖c1. The same goes for 43...♖a3 44.♖b1, and if he moves his king my rook goes to f6. Finally, if he played 43...♖b7 I had 44.d4 exd4 45.♗xd4 ♗g7 46.♗xg7 ♖xg7 47.♔e3, which should be a draw, but he would still have to work for it.

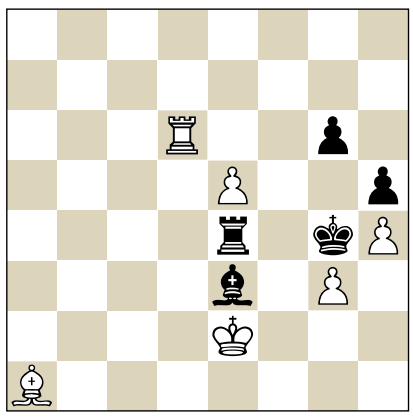
44.♖d1 ♖b3 45.♖g1 ♔f6 See the note to Black's 41st. **46.♖h1** Now, after 46.g4 hxg4 47.♖xg4 ♖a3, I will have a problem with my bishop on a1.

46...♔e6 47.♖d1 ♔f6 48.d4 ♖e3+ 49.♔f2 ♖xe4 50.dxe5+ ♔f5 51.♖d7



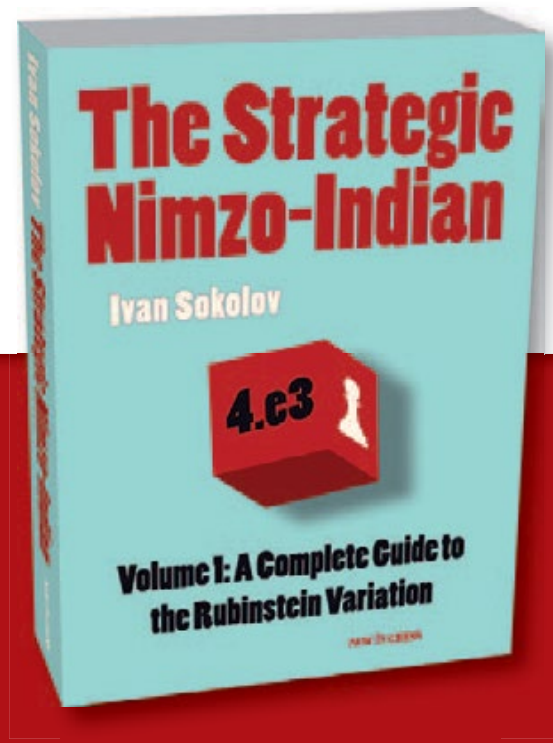
51...♔g4 Not the only way to make a draw, but the first line of the computer and played very quickly. It's clear that this kind of position holds no secrets for Magnus.

52.♖d6 ♗e3+ 53.♔e2 A last attempt to set a trap. 53.♔g2 g5 is an easy draw.



53...♗f4+ There were various ways to the draw, but there was one way to go wrong in the line 53...♗c5+ 54.♔d3 ♗xd6 (at this point Black can blunder with 54...♖e3+ 55.♔c4 ♗xd6 56.exd6 ♖e8 57.♗f6, and White wins, but after such a long and strong defence it was not realistic to think that Magnus would fall for such a cheapo) 55.♔xe4 ♗e7 56.♔d5 ♔xg3 57.♔e6 ♗xh4 58.♔f7 ♔g4, with a draw.

54.♔d3 ♖e3+ 55.♔c4 ♗xe5 56.♖xg6+ ♔f3 57.♗xe5 ♖xe5 58.♖g5 ♖e4+ 59.♔d5 ♖g4 60.♔e5 ♔xg3 61.♖xh5 ♖xh4 62.♖xh4 ♔xh4 And with two kings left, we smilingly agreed to a draw.



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NOTES BY
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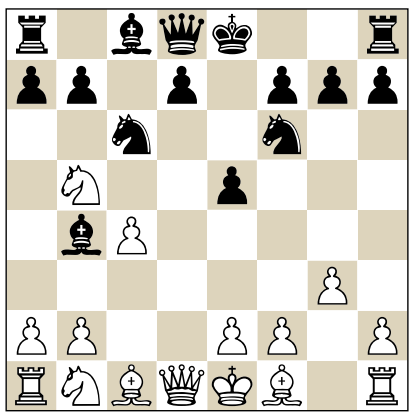
EO 46.11 – A31
Levon Aronian
Hikaru Nakamura
London 2012 (1)

I always look forward to playing in London every December, and this was no exception. However, unlike in past years, I was returning only two months after the single worst performance in my chess career as a professional. Nevertheless, one must always move forward and focus on the future instead of dwelling on the past. This first-round game against Levon was a very good way of truly putting everything behind me.

1.c4 c5

During our last encounter in the Tal Memorial, I played 1...e5. This time around, I felt like trying something new and fresh.

2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.g3 e5 6.♘b5 ♗b4+



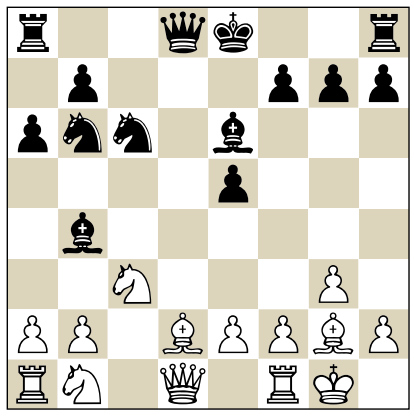
7.♗d2

After 7.♘1c3 d6 8.♗g2 a6 9.♘a3 ♗xc3+ 10.bxc3 0-0 11.0-0 h6 12.♘c2 ♕c7 13.♘e3 ♗e6, Black is completely fine, as witness the game Kramnik-Grischuk from the 2011 Candidates' tournament in Kazan.

7...a6 8.♘5c3

After 8.♗xb4 axb5 9.♗d6 ♘e4 10.♗g2 ♘xd6 11.♕xd6 bxc4 12.♘d2 b5 13.♗xc6 dxc6 14.♕xe5+ ♔f8 15.0-0 ♕e7 a complicated position arises, leaving both sides with plenty of chances.

8...d5 9.cxd5 ♘xd5 10.♗g2 ♗e6 11.0-0 ♘b6

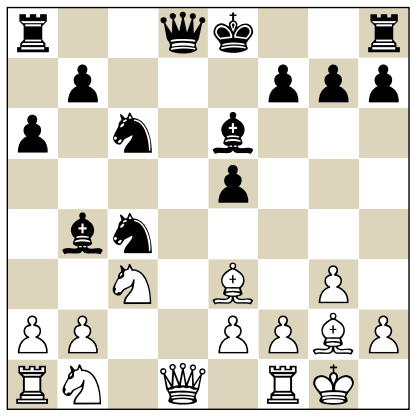


12.♗e3

A novelty, but one which does not change the overall evaluation of this variation.

After 12.♘e4 ♗e7 13.♗e3 ♘c4 14.♗c1 ♕xd1 15.♖xd1 ♘d4 16.♘bc3 0-0-0, Black has finished his development and has obtained a nice advantage, as was seen in the game Shchekachev-Edouard, France 2011.

12...♘c4 The first critical moment of the game. The balance hinges upon whether White can finish his queenside development before Black has developed fully.

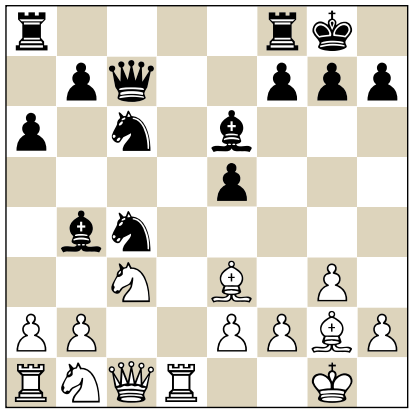


13.♕c1

Objectively speaking, this move is OK. However, it is the more passive way of playing the position.

Instead, 13.♕a4 is much more active and forcing: 13...♘xe3 14.fxe3 (the correct order; after 14.♗xc6+ bxc6 15.fxe3 – 15.♕xc6+ ♗d7 16.♕e4 leaves White simply down too much material – 15...♕b6 the bishop pair combined with White's ruined pawn structure yields Black a decisive advantage) 14...♕b6 15.♘d5 ♗xd5 16.♗xd5 0-0 17.♕b3 ♘a5 18.♕d3 ♗c5 19.♘c3 ♗xe3+ 20.♔h1 ♗d4 21.♖ad1, and although White is down a pawn here, with the strong bishop on d5 the position remains balanced.

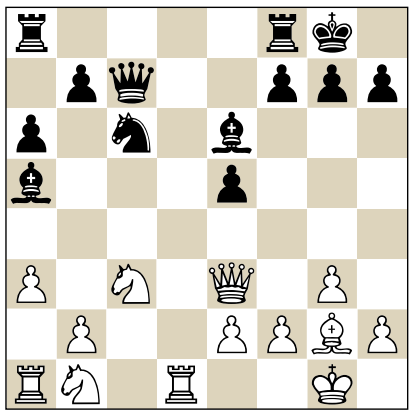
13...0-0 14.♖d1 ♕c7



15.a3!? Another surprise for me. I was really not sure at this point whether Levon did not sense any danger or whether he thought he could play for more than equality.

The more natural way of continuing was 15.♘d5 ♗xd5 16.♖xd5 (16.♗xd5 ♘xe3 17.♕xe3 ♘d4 18.♕d3 ♖ad8 19.e4 ♖d6, and Black continues to have better chances thanks to the knight on d4) 16...♘xe3 17.♕xe3 ♘d4 18.♘a3, and White has obtained complete equality.

15...♘xe3 16.♕xe3 ♗a5



17.♘d2? Yet again, Levon refused to put a knight on d5. Overall, I suspect that he overestimated his position.

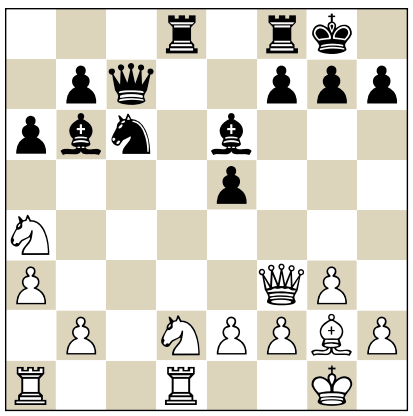
He should have played 17.♘d5 ♗xd5 18.♗xd5 ♖ad8 19.♘c3 ♘d4 20.♖ab1! and once again, White has absolutely no problems.

17...♗b6

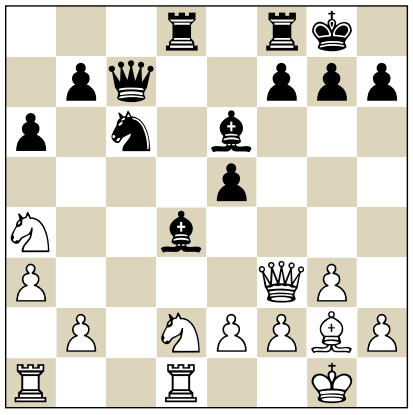
From here on in, Black is the only player with chances. Although com-

pletely different, this idea of a bishop on the a7-g1 diagonal combined with f5- and e5-pawns reminded me a lot of Levon's very critical win over Anish Giri from the Istanbul Olympiad.

18.♕f3 ♖ad8 19.♘a4



19...♗a7?! While there is nothing wrong with this natural move, I missed an opportunity to be more precise: 19...♗d4!, and now:



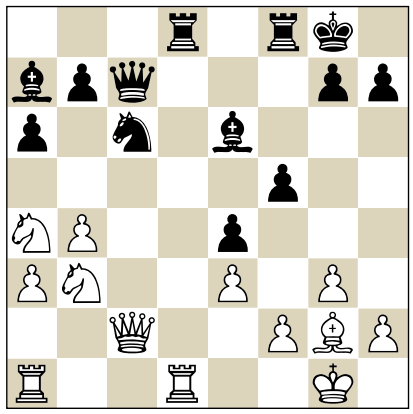
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 20.e3 ♕a5! 21.♘c3 (in case of 21.exd4 ♕xa4 White is going to end up down material, since 22.dxe5 is impossible because of 22...♗g4!) 21...♗xc3 22.bxc3 f5 23.♕e2 e4, and Black is much better;

B) 20.♖ac1 ♕a5 21.b3 (21.♘c3 f5 22.e3 ♗xc3 23.bxc3 – after 23.♖xc3 ♕b5! all of White's pieces are too loose – 23...e4 24.♕e2 ♘e5 and White is completely lost) 21...f5 22.e3 ♗a7, and unlike in the game, White has an additional set of weaknesses on the queenside. With correct play, this is probably close to lost;

C) After 20.♘e4 ♕a5 21.♘ac3 f5 22.♘g5 ♗b3 23.♖dc1 h6 24.♘h3 e4 25.♕f4 g5 26.♘xg5 hxg5 27.♕xg5+ ♗g7 Black is up a piece and clearly winning.

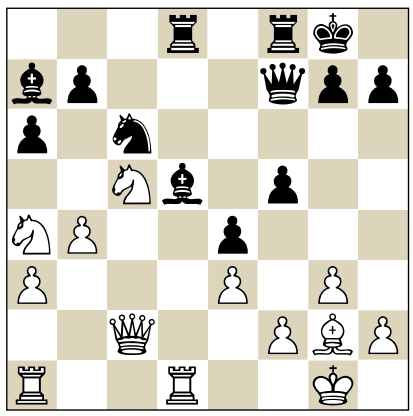
20.♕c3 ♖d4 21.♕c2 f5 22.e3 ♖dd8 23.b4 e4 24.♘b3



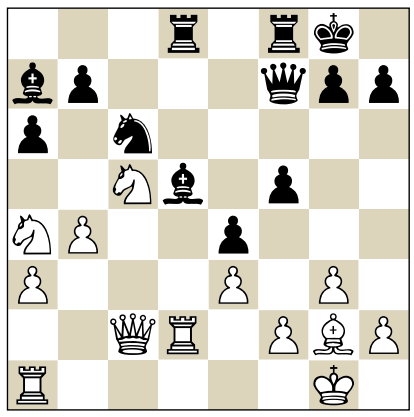
24...♕f7?! After this critical slip, Levon had an opportunity to get back to equality. Strangely, he didn't play the right continuation.

After 24...♕e7 25.♘ac5 ♗f7, Black still keeps the advantage.

25.♘bc5 ♗d5



26.♖d2? During the post-mortem, Levon mentioned that he had seen 26.♘c3. I'm not quite sure what he had missed exactly: 26...♗xc5 27.♖xd5 ♖xd5 28.♘xd5 ♕xd5 (28...♗d4 29.♘c3 ♗f6 30.♖d1, and White has absolutely no problems) 29.bxc5 ♖d8 30.♖b1 ♘e5 31.♗f1, and with a much better placed bishop now, this should be a relatively easy draw.



26...b6!

Apparently Levon had simply overlooked this little one-move trick.

27.♖xd5

After 27.♘xa6 ♗b3 28.♕xc6 ♖xd2 29.♘c3 (29.♘xb6 ♖fd8) 29...♖c2 Black simply wins more material.

27...♖xd5 28.♘xa6 ♘e5 29.♖d1 ♖fd8 30.♖xd5 ♕xd5 31.♘b2 ♕d2 32.♕c7 ♘g4 Levon resigned here, as mate cannot be stopped without a significant loss of material.

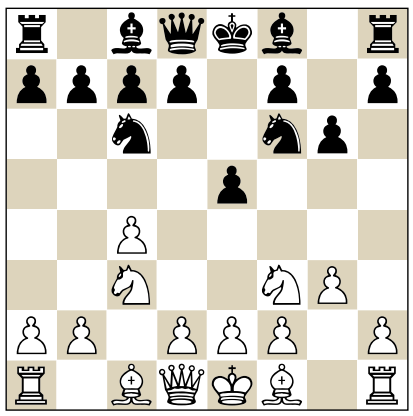
Although his passion for blitz belongs to the past, Hikaru Nakamura was easily persuaded to play a one-minute game against David Norwood, GM and former captain of the English team, who these days lives in Andorra.

NOTES BY
Michael Adams

EO 13.5 – A29
Vishy Anand
Michael Adams
London 2012 (6)

This was a key game in my event. After displaying the survival instincts of a lemming in my game with Magnus the day before, it was important to get back on track with a more solid performance.

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.g3 g6

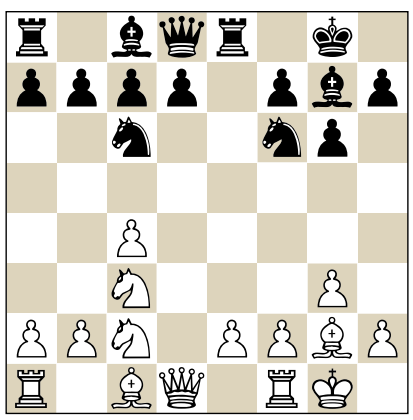


I hadn't expected Vishy to play the English Opening, and opted to sidestep his preparation with a variation that I hadn't tried for many years, which I had analysed before the Olympiad.

5.d4 exd4 6.♘xd4 ♗g7 7.♗g2

Older theory suggests 7.♘xc6 bxc6 gives White good chances of an edge, but to the modern eye 7...dxc6 looks like a fine version of the Berlin Variation.

7...0-0 8.0-0 ♖e8 9.♘c2



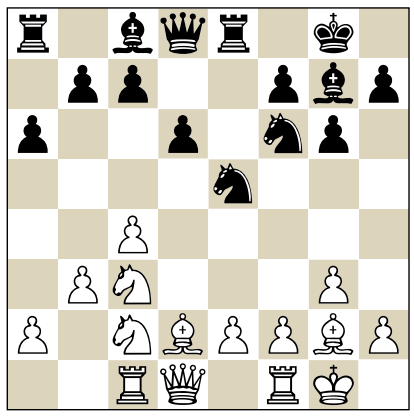
As White can't maintain his knight in the centre, in my opinion Black shouldn't have many problems here, but from a practical point of view I was somewhat concerned that I'm not an experienced King's Indian practitioner.

9...d6 10.♗d2

Here 10.b3 is a more common choice, but after 10...♗f5, planning ...♘e4, Black looks quite comfortable.

The game set-up was rarely played but looked very logical to me. White prevents Black freeing his position with exchanges, and consolidates with ♖c1 and b3 before moving forward, possibly by playing ♘c2-e3.

10...a6 11.♖c1 ♘e5 12.b3



12...c6 When I looked at this position, I thought 12...♖b8 planning ...b5 was sensible, but at the board I felt it was a good idea to cover the d5-square immediately. The possibility of ...b5 is still not out of the question, as the rook can sometimes play a role from its starting position.

13.♗e3 I was expecting 13.h3, when the key, possibly theoretically important, issue is whether the thematic 13...b5 is playable.

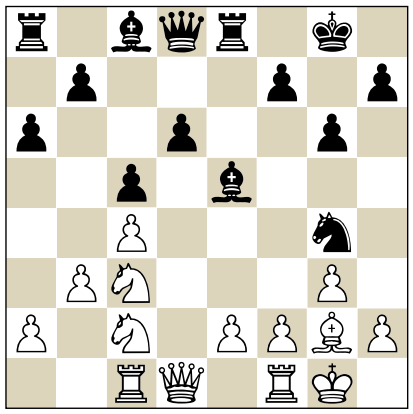
13...♘fg4

If Black doesn't harass the dark-squared bishop, White can continue harmonious development with ♕d2.

14.♗d4 c5 It is more accurate to challenge the bishop immediately rather than play 14...♖b8 15.♕d2.

15.♗xe5 ♗xe5

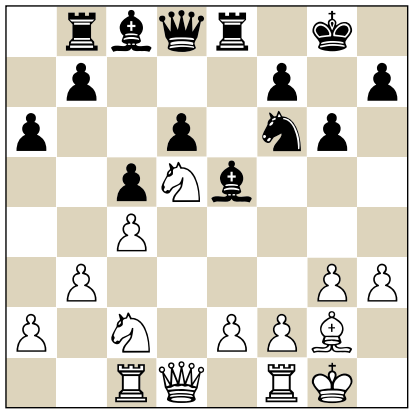
Although White has a raking bishop and good control of the d5-point (although it's helpful for Black that only one of White's pieces can occupy this spot), the bishop pair and in particular the strong dark-squared bishop counterbalance the backward pawn on d6.



16.♘d5 If 16.♕d2 then 16...♗xc3 17.♕xc3 ♖xe2 18.h3 ♘f6 19.♘e3 ♖xa2 gains another pawn and gives the rook an exit strategy.

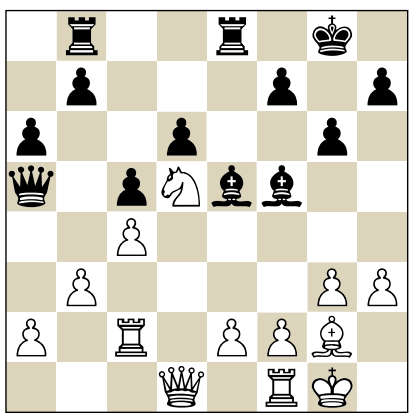
16...♖b8 The ...b5 break remains a key part of my plans.

17.h3 ♘f6



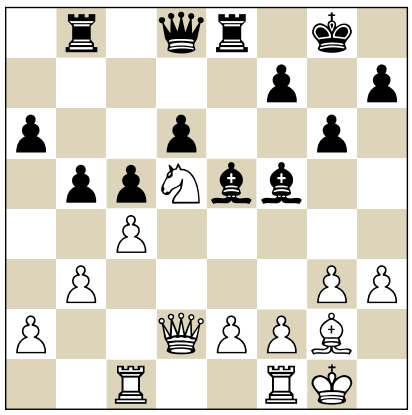
18.♘ce3 ♘xd5 19.♘xd5 ♕a5 20.♖c2 Not 20.♕c2, as 20...♗f5 forces the positionally undesirable 21.e4.

20...♗f5

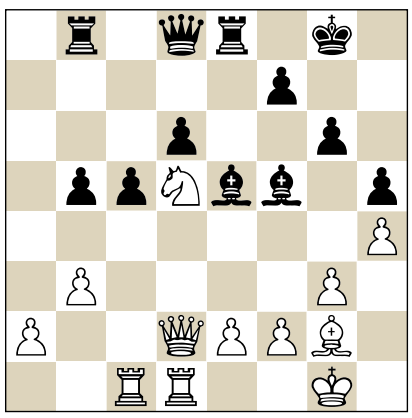


21.♕d2 White keeps co-ordination intact with this tactic, as 21.♖d2 b5 looks awkward.

21...♕d8 My structural problems become more serious after the queen swap, so a strategic withdrawal is in order.
22.♖cc1 b5

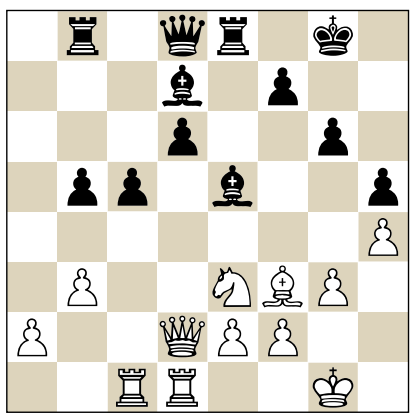


23.cxb5
If 23.♖fd1 I have the option to play 23...b4, although the useful 23...h5 looks the best reply.
I was analysing 24.b4, but once the game opens up after 24...bxc4 25.♖xc4 cxb4 26.♘xb4 ♕a5, the bishop pair is strong enough to prevent any real problems.
The immediate capture has the long-term plan that White might be able to achieve contented minor pieces by transferring his knight to c4 and landing his bishop on d5 after my b-pawn advances.
23...axb5 24.♖fd1 h5 25.h4
Practically it seems wise to prevent ...h4, as immediate action with 25.b4 c4 26.a4 bxa4 27.♖xc4 a3 rebounds on White.

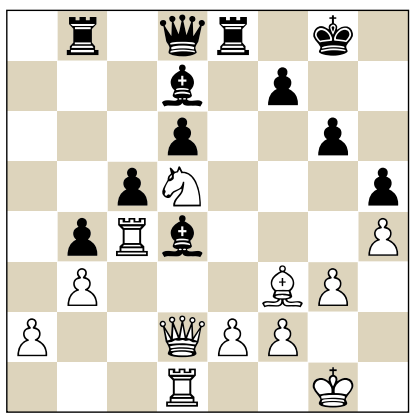


25...♗g4
I wasn't sure how to strengthen my position, so decided to annoy the pawn on e2, keeping my opponent's forces off balance.
26.♘e3 ♗d7 27.♗f3

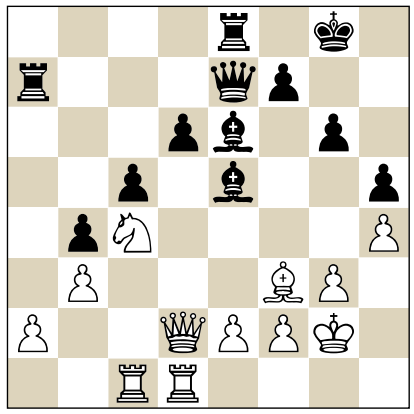
Mickey Adams took his time to double-check the killer blow that undid Vishy Anand. 'I saw it quite fast, but then I started to become quite paranoid.'



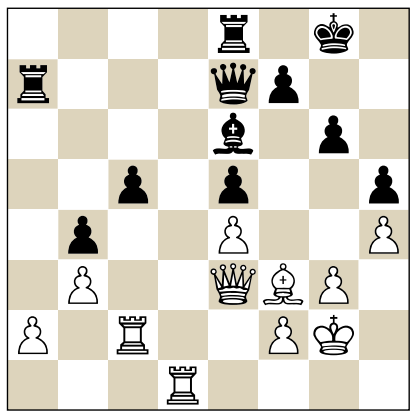
27...♗d4 I didn't like 27...♖b6 28.b4 c4 29.a4, and 27...♕b6 seemed to move my queen too far from the kingside, so I decided to harass the knight.
28.♘d5 b4 Solidifying my pawn chain is timely here, as the knight will take a while to regroup to c4.
29.♖c4



Menacing a strong exchange sacrifice, but once the bishop withdraws the rook will soon have to follow suit.
29...♗e5 30.♔g2 ♖a8 31.♘e3 ♖a7 I was unsure as to which square was best for my rook. 31...♖a6 has the advantage of defending my d-pawn but I didn't feel comfortable leaving it where White could gain a tempo with a later ♕d3.
32.♖cc1 I was anticipating 32.♖c2 ♕e7 33.♘c4 ♗f5, which transposes to the game.
32...♕e7 33.♘c4 ♗e6



34.♖c2 I was intending to meet 34.♘xe5 dxe5 35.♕c2 with 35...♗f5.
34...♗f5 35.e4 ♗e6 36.♘xe5 dxe5 37.♕e3



London 2012 cat. XXI

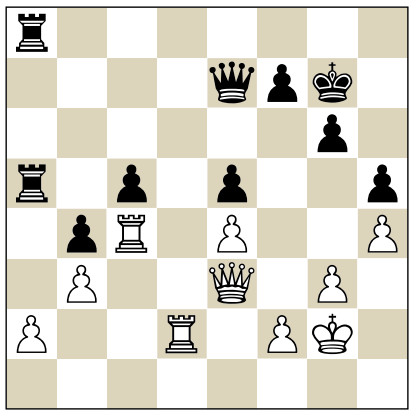
					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		TPR
1	Magnus Carlsen	IGM	NOR	2848	*	½	½	1	½	1	1	1	1	18	2991
2	Vladimir Kramnik	IGM	RUS	2795	½	*	1	½	½	½	1	1	1	16	2939
3	Hikaru Nakamura	IGM	USA	2760	½	0	*	½	½	1	1	1	½	13	2846
4	Michael Adams	IGM	ENG	2710	0	½	½	*	1	½	1	½	1	13	2852
5	Vishy Anand	IGM	IND	2775	½	½	½	0	*	½	½	½	1	9	2749
6	Levon Aronian	IGM	ARM	2815	0	½	0	½	½	*	½	1	½	8	2701
7	Judit Polgar	IGM	HUN	2705	0	0	0	0	½	½	*	1	½	6	2617
8	Luke McShane	IGM	ENG	2713	0	0	0	½	½	0	0	*	1	5	2564
9	Gawain Jones	IGM	ENG	2644	0	0	½	0	0	½	½	0	*	3	2514

3 points for a win, 1 for a draw, 0 for a loss

37...♖a5

I initially thought Black would be very comfortable here due to my well placed bishop, but in fact the position remains balanced, as c5 is weak and White can angle for a bishop swap.

The most direct 37...♖ea8 38.♖dd2 ♖a5 39.♗e2 ♔g7 40.♗c4 ♗xc4 41.♖xc4 was best, although I felt White's greater centralization makes his position marginally preferable.



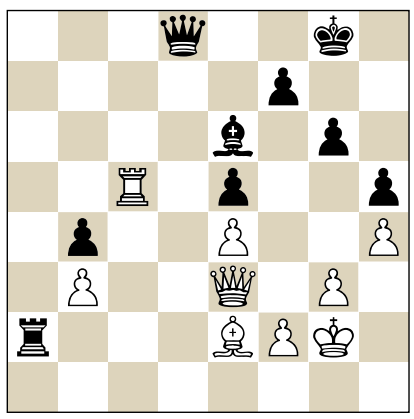
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

In fact after 41...♖xa2 42.♖xa2 ♖xa2 43.♖xc5, 43...♕a7 is a very useful move, so 43.♕xc5 with a draw would bring the game to a logical conclusion.

38.♗e2 ♖d8

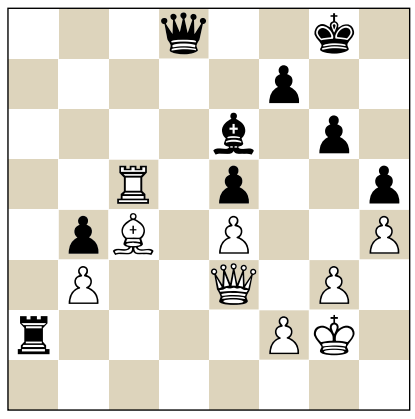
I should still have played 38...♖ea8, but this small inaccuracy proves very profitable.

39.♖xd8+ ♕xd8 40.♖xc5 ♖xa2



41.♗c4

After the anticipated 41.♖xe5, I knew 41...♕d2 42.♕xd2 ♖xd2 43.♗c4 ♗xc4 44.bxc4 ♖c2 45.♖c5 should be a draw, although the ensuing 4 versus 3 is not that much fun despite the favourable pawn structure from the defender's point of view. I then investigated 41...♗xb3 but 42.♖b5 (42.♕xb3 ♖xe2 43.♕xb4 ♖xf2+ 44.♔xf2 ♕f6+ leads to a draw, 42.♗xh5 is interesting) 42...♕d2 43.♖b8+ ♔g7 44.♕c5 certainly didn't look promising, but perhaps checking this line helped me to find the idea 41...♕d1 in the game. The best move is the cool 41...♕f6, not hurrying to regain the pawn, although the lines 42.♖c5 (42.♖b5 ♕c3) 42...♗xb3 43.♖c8+ ♔g7 44.♖b8 ♕c3 or 43.e5 ♕f5 44.♗d3 ♖xf2+ wouldn't be easy to calculate confidently over the board.



41...♕d1

I saw the idea at once (as did my opponent as soon as he had executed his move) but took a long time to play it. I found it hard to believe Vishy's natural last move deserved such a harsh fate.

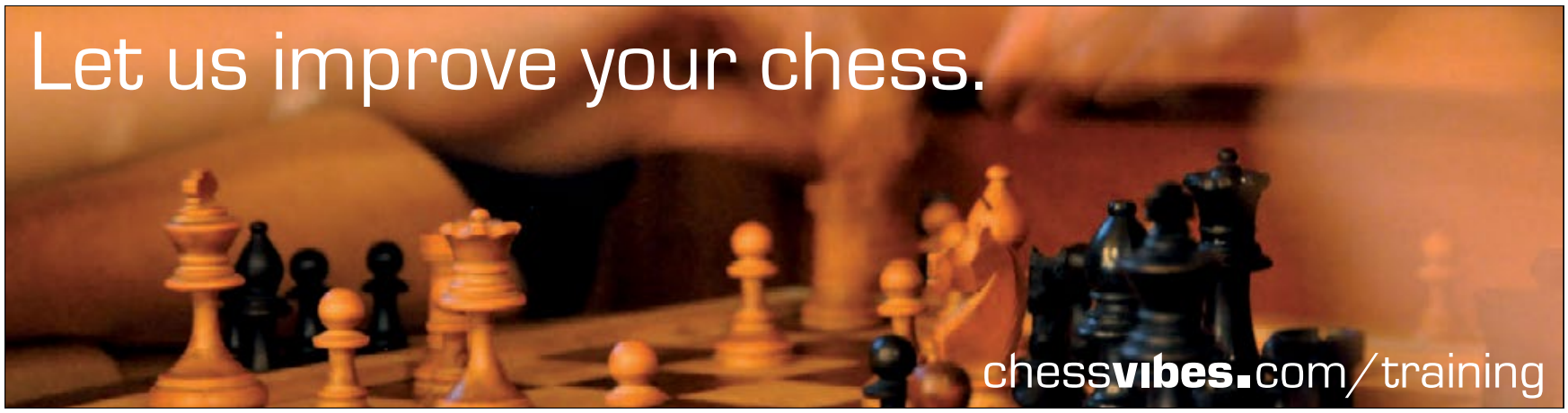
42.♕h6

The best try, as 42.♗xe6 ♖a1 43.♗xf7+ (43.♖c8+ ♔g7) 43...♔g7 is completely hopeless. White can't switch to defence, as 42.♕f3 ♗h3+ wins the house.

42...♗h3+

Fortunately it was not difficult to avoid 42...♖a1 43.♖c8+ ♗xc8 44.♕xg6+ ♔h8 45.♕f6+, and White wins.

White resigned. ■



Carlsen's Endgame Magic

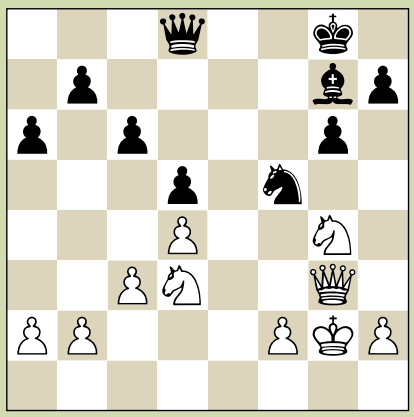
During the London Classic, I was kindly given a lift home most nights by Julian Hodgson, who lives nearby. On the way we chatted and unsurprisingly Magnus Carlsen was a frequent topic.

Jon Speelman

It really is extraordinary how in the last couple of years, Carlsen has earned his reputation as an endgame wizard and spread fear among opponents who are extremely wary about going into even an equal endgame. Julian felt that Carlsen is moving towards another level with a degree of precision seldom if ever before seen. As one of the pioneers of the computer chess generation, he has trained with them from an early age and compared his play especially in the endgame where they are so powerful. Perfection is impossible for human being and silicon monster alike (except where we go into the realm of endgame tablebases). But both can aspire to it and Carlsen is certainly one of the nearest that human beings have yet achieved and perhaps the nearest.

During the course of London, he had a number of fascinating endings and we'll now look at several. Perhaps the most interesting aspect is not the absolute precision or perforce otherwise of Carlsen's play, but how through the combined force of his skill and no less important his reputation, he drives his opponents into errors.

I've concentrated here on endgames where, as more often happens, Carlsen was striving for the win. Of course, he's also a superb defender. He saved the game as Black against Kramnik with great aplomb, remaining unruffled when he entered the ending a pawn down; and was also on the worse side at the very end of a hugely complicated battle against Hikaru Nakamura – though despite being a piece down it was a pretty trivial draw.



McShane-Carlsen
Round 1
position after 35...♘f5

In the first round, Carlsen had come under serious pressure early on against Luke McShane, but escaped with a trick. The late middlegame/endgame began a couple of moves earlier with a pair of rooks still on the board, and we could have picked it up anywhere around here but this is as good as any.

Carlsen's objective assessment of the position is that it's 'marginally better for Black but should be a draw' and this is surely correct – if 'God played God' then Black would have the more fun but it would be drawn. However, chess games between human beings are of course not played in a vacuum. McShane had suffered a disappointment to reach this position and moreover was in serious time-trouble, while Carlsen had had success. And like Anatoly Karpov in his pomp, Carlsen does not breathe a sigh of relief when he escapes from difficulties, but treats the new position as a stepping stone towards the full point.

36.♕h3?!

36.♕f4 was more accurate.

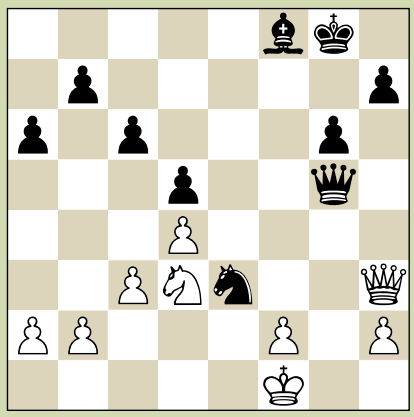
36...♗f8

Carlsen makes a good positional move, but 36...♕e7! would have been more annoying for White, stopping ♘e3 for the moment.

37.♘e3!

Quite rightly opposing the powerful enemy knight.

37...♕g5+ 38.♔f1 ♘xe3+



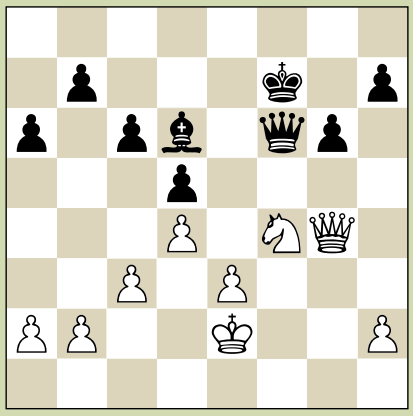
39.fxe3

The pure endgame with ♘ vs. ♗ may be playable because White can try to get in e4 quickly before Black sets up ...g5, ...h5, ...♔f5 and then ...g4. However, it's impossible to tell in time-trouble and would have been very risky indeed.

For example, if 39.♕xe3 ♕xe3 40.fxe3 ♗d6 41.♔g2 ♔g7 42.h3 ♔f6 43.♔f3 ♔f5 44.♘f2 g5? 45.e4+ dxe4+ 46.♘xe4 is quite okay because if 46...♗c7 then 47.♘c5. But if Black just plays 44...a5, say 45.e4+ dxe4+ 46.♘xe4 ♗c7, then White is certainly in some danger.

So, of course Luke kept the queens on – after all ♕+♘ is often better than ♕+♗.

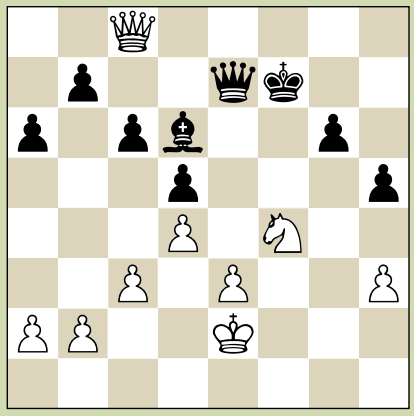
39...♔g7 40.♘f4 ♕f6 41.♔e2 ♗d6 42.♕g4 ♔f7



43.h3

The h-pawn has to move at some point to avoid dropping off. For the moment the pawn endgame (after two exchanges on f4) would be drawn so Carlsen calmly improves his position.

43...h5 44.♕c8 ♕e7



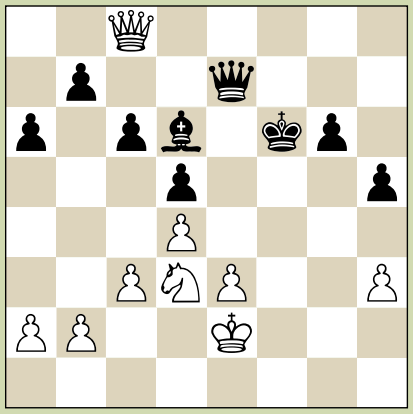
45.♘d3?! It's always a moot point whether the knight dominates the bishop in such circumstances or vice versa, but here it's pretty clear that the bishop is in the ascendant.

Instead, the knight should have been left on f4, when I've seen both 45.♔d2 and 45.♔f2 recommended. The idea of the former is 45.♔d2 ♔f6 46.h4, to stop ...♔g5. White claims that after the black king retreats, and an exchange on f4 and ...♕xh4, he will get enough counterplay, but passed h-pawns are extremely powerful in queen endings and this looks very risky indeed.

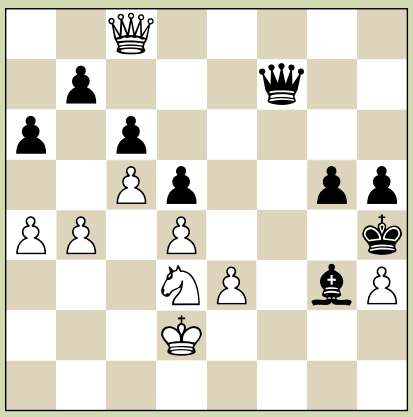
Instead, 45.♔f2 looks right, to shore up the kingside. With the queen so active, the exchange on f4 shouldn't be a problem and it will be really difficult to advance the black king with the knight on f4. For example, if 45...♔f6 46.a4!? say 46...♔g5 47.h4+! ♔f6 48.♕h8+ ♔f5 (if 48...♕g7 – a horrible square – 49.♕d8+ ♕e7 repeats) 49.♕c8+ ♔f6 with a draw – if 49...♔e4?? 50.♕h3 ♗xf4 51.exf4 Black is already dead lost: 51...♕d6 52.♔e2! and there is no defence against 53.♕d3+ and 54.♕f3 mate.

45...♔f6

Carlsen's plan is now obvious. To play ...♔g5-h4 and then wreak destruction. White has a couple of tempi to prepare for this.

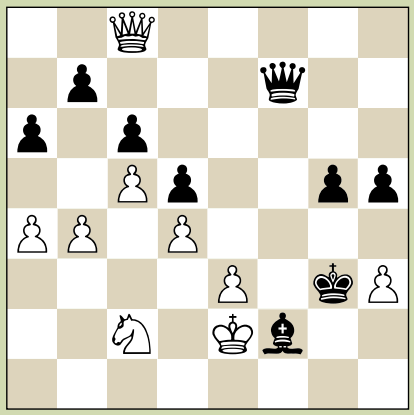


46.b3 After a long think, Luke rightly decided that he had to 'do something'.
46...♔g5 47.c4 ♔h4
'Now I was already feeling very optimistic' – Carlsen.
48.c5?! It looks wrong to close the queenside, since White's counterplay will be ponderous, and indeed 'At this point I thought it was over' – Carlsen. However, 48.cxd5 cxd5 49.♕g8 ♕g5! was also very nasty.
48...♗g3 49.b4 ♕f7 Preventing ♕f5 before advancing the g-pawn.
50.a4 g5 51.♔d2

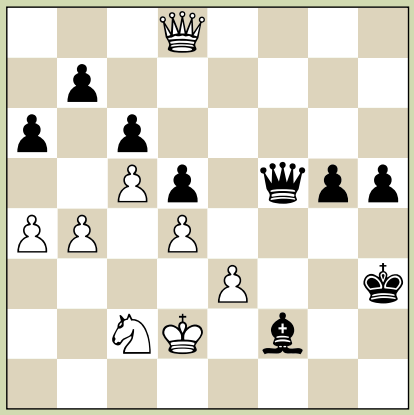


Although Black has made huge progress, it still looks difficult to achieve more, but here Carlsen showed his class with:
51...♗h2! Freeing g3 for the king and preparing to hit e3 from g1.
52.♘e1 ♔g3 Computers recommend 52...a5, when if 53.bxa5 ♗c7 or 53.b5 cxb5 54.axb5 ♕f2+ 55.♔d1 ♗g3 56.♘c2 ♕f1+ 57.♔d2 ♕xb5. This is still quite messy after 58.♕d8, but in any case it's hard even for Carlsen to play a move as committal as 52...a5 followed by 53...cxb5, which is extremely antipositional but leads to favourable tactics.

53.♘c2 ♗g1 54.♕d8 ♔h4 55.♕c8 ♗f2 56.♔e2 ♔g3

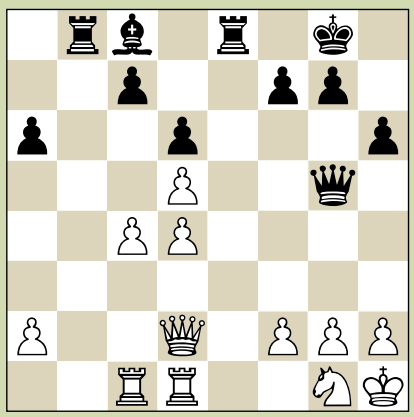


Up to this point, Luke had fought splendidly if against ever-increasing odds to save himself, but here the combined pressure of the position, the clock and Carlsen told, and he blundered.
57.♕d8? ♕f5! 58.♔d2 ♔xh3



Now it's absolutely over.
59.b5 g4 60.bxc6 bxc6 61.♘b4 g3 62.♘d3 g2 White resigned.

A very impressive example, but Carlsen was never under any pressure, whereas the next day against Levon Aronian it was much more double-edged.

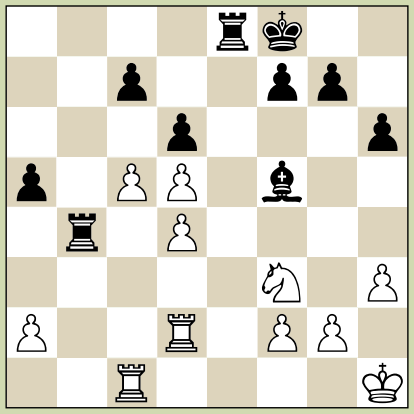


Carlsen-Aronian
Round 2
position after 24.bxc4

Carlsen had won a pawn out of the opening, but it was doubled and hard to rate its significance. Here Aronian went into the ending in the very reasonable belief that he had sufficient counterplay.
24...♕xd2 25.♖xd2 a5
The basic problem with annotating games, and indeed the more so now that we have computer assistance, is that it's hard to assess how you would have felt about the position had you had it yourself. My feeling though is that as White against an opponent as tricky as Aronian, even in my prime, I would have been very wary because of Black's control of the b-file and the ever-present danger of a disaster if something happened on a2.
Certainly, in the VIP commentary room we felt that it was extremely difficult for White to win. But the really impressive thing now was the exceptionally calm way in which Carlsen improved his position, even if Aronian missed good chances along the way.
26.h3 ♖b4 27.♘f3 ♗f5 28.c5 ♔f8

NEW IN CHESS

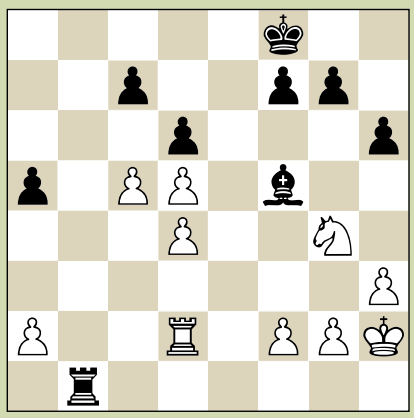
Luke McShane was the first opponent to fall victim to the 'Carlsen effect'.



29.♘h2 To improve the knight. Black could now have regained the pawn with 29...♗e4 30.♘f1 (not 30.♘g4 f5!) 30...♗xd5. I guess that he may have been worried then about 31.♘e3 ♗e4 32.f3, but after 32...♖b1 (32...♗xf3 33.♘c2 ♖b2 is a dubious piece sacrifice) 33.♖xb1 ♗xb1 Black is at least equal, since if 34.♘d5?! dxc5 35.dxc5? (35.♖b2 is necessary first but 35...♗d3 36.dxc5 c6 looks fine for Black) 35...♖d8, and Black wins material.

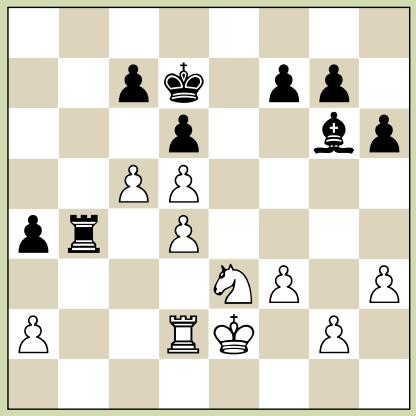
29...♖eb8 30.♘g4 ♖b1 30...♖b2 looks better: if 31.♖xb2 ♖xb2 32.♘e3 ♗g6 33.cxd6 cxd6 34.♖c8+ ♔e7 35.♖c7+ ♔d8 36.♖a7 ♖xa2 37.♘c4 ♖xf2 38.♘xd6 ♖f4 39.♘b5 ♖f5 should be a draw.

31.♖xb1 ♖xb1+ 32.♔h2



32...a4 This was the last chance to exchange off the knight, and after 32...♗xg4 33.hxg4 ♖b5 it can't be too bad for Black. Aronian may perhaps have been wary of 34.c6!?, but after 34...♖xd5 35.♖b2 ♖xd4 36.♖b7 ♖d2 37.♖xc7 ♖xf2 the black king is near enough to the c-pawn, and 38.♖d7 ♔e8 39.♖xd6 ♔e7 40.♖d7+ ♔e6 should lead to a draw after 41.a4 ♖f4 42.♖d8 ♖c4 43.♖a8 ♖c5 44.c7 ♔d7 45.c8♕+ ♖xc8 46.♖xa5 ♖c4 47.♔g3 say.

33.♘e3 ♗g6 34.♔g3 ♖b4 35.♔f3 ♔e7 36.♔e2 ♔d7 37.f3



Aronian's play has been rather aimless for the last few moves and Carlsen is starting to get control.

37...♖b5 38.♘d1!

So that if 38...dxc5 39.♘c3 ♖a5 40.dxc5 ♖xc5 41.♘xa4, with a safe advantage, though lots still to do to win.

38...♖b4 39.c6+ ♔c8 40.♘c3 f6

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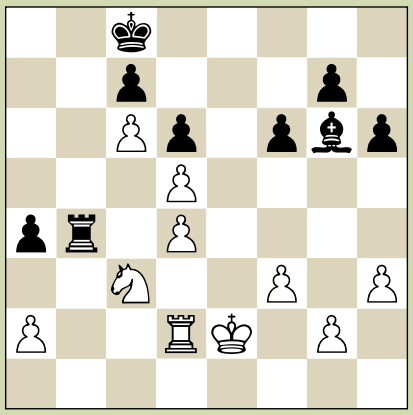
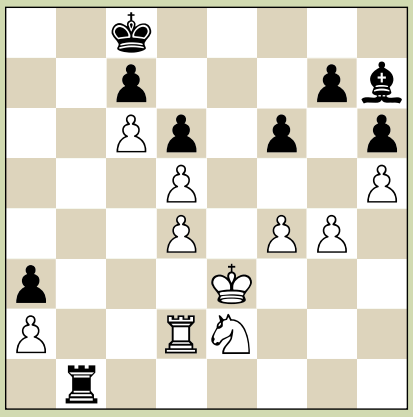


Reaching the time control with a move which is very natural but does weaken e6, so that if the knight ever makes it there it will be exceedingly nasty.

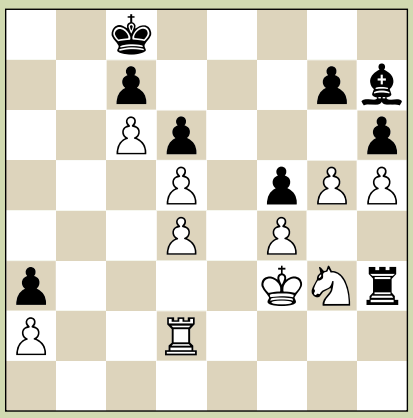
41.♔e3 ♖c4 42.♘e2 a3 43.h4 ♖b4 44.g4! When you can't immediately achieve anything on one flank it's normally correct if possible to improve on the other.

44...♖b1 45.h5 ♗h7 46.f4!



Threatening to bury the bishop. The more we looked the more we realised how in a few short moves Black's position had become absolutely critical, and I was rather expecting Aronian's desperate sequence (even ...g6), however ugly it looks.

46...f5 47.g5 ♖h1 48.♘g3 ♖h3 49.♔f3



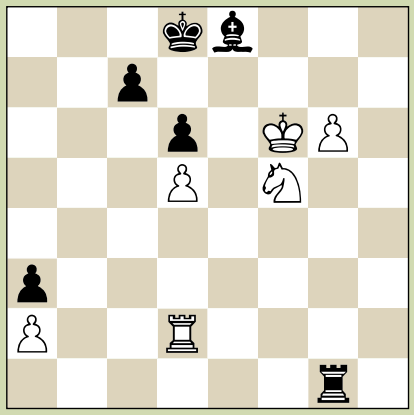
49...hxg5

If 49...♔d8 50.♔g2 ♖h4 51.g6 ♗g8 52.♘xf5 ♖xf4?, 53.♘e3! keeps complete control. Instead, 52...♗xd5+! 53.♔g3 ♖xh5 54.♘xg7 ♖h1 55.f5 is a real mess, though White should probably have a big advantage, indeed be winning.

I suppose I could start analysing this for pages, but the main point is that Aronian needed to try it since as played he set Carlsen quite an easy task.

50.fxg5 g6

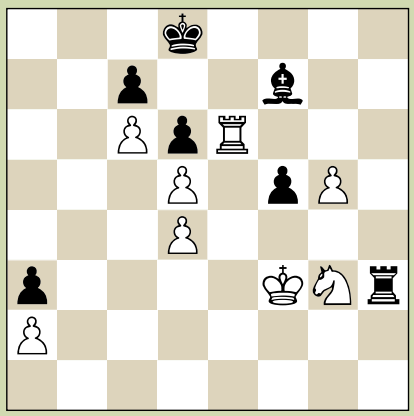
Again 50...♔d8 was more difficult for White but if he plays the obvious moves then they are pretty strong: 51.g6 ♗g8 52.♔f4 ♗xd5 53.♘xf5 ♖xh5 54.♘xg7 ♖h1 55.♘f5 and if 55...♖f1+ 56.♔g5 ♗xc6 57.d5 ♖g1+ 58.♔f6 ♗e8 sets up a pretty helpmate.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

But after 59.♘h4 (rather than 59.g7?? ♖g6 mate) 59...♖f1+ 60.♔g5 ♖h1 61.♖g2 ♖h3 62.♘f5 White is winning.

51.♖e2 ♔d8 52.hxg6 ♗xg6 53.♖e6 ♗f7

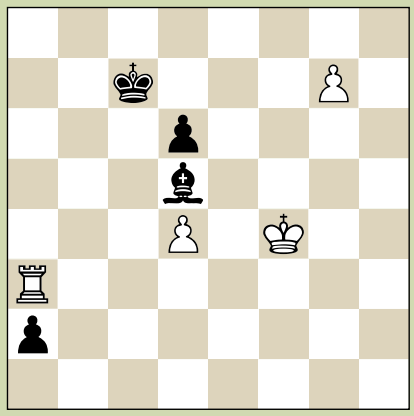


54.g6 54.♖h6 was another way to win: 54...♗xd5+ 55.♔f4 ♖xg3 (or 55...♗g2 56.♘xf5 ♔e8 57.♖e6+ ♔d8 58.g6) 56.♔xg3 ♗xa2 57.♖h8+ ♔e7 58.♖c8 and it's easy enough to mop up.

54...♗g8! Fighting on for a moment. If 54...♗xe6 55.dxe6 ♖h6 56.g7 ♖g6 57.♘xf5 is trivial.

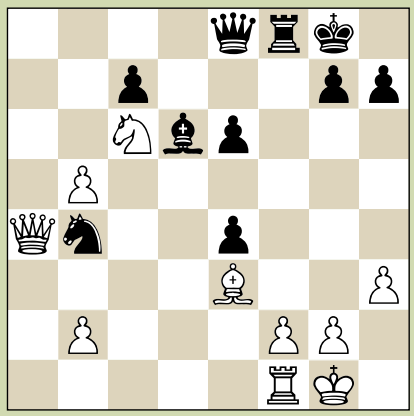
55.g7 f4 56.♔xf4 ♖h2 57.♘f5 ♖xa2 Or 57...♖f2+ 58.♔g5 ♖g2+ (58...♖xa2 59.♖h6) 59.♔f6 ♖xa2 60.♖e3 ♗xd5 61.♖h3 ♖e2 62.♖xa3.

58.♖f6 ♖e2 59.♖f8+ Here Aronian resigned much too early really. After 59...♖e8 60.♘xd6! cxd6 61.c7+ ♔xc7 62.♖xe8 a2 63.♖a8 ♗xd5 64.♖a3 White is indeed winning, but only just.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

For example 64...♔c6 65.♔f5 ♔b5 66.♔f6 ♔b4 67.♖a7 (or 67...♗g8 68.♔e7 ♔c3 69.♖a4 ♔b3 70.♖xa2 ♔xa2 71.♔xd6!) 67...♔c3 68.♖a5 ♗b3 69.d5 ♗xd5 70.♖xd5 a1♕ 71.g8♕ ♔c4+ 72.♔e6. I suppose this was another instance of the 'Carlsen effect'.



Adams-Carlsen
Round 5
position after 22.♘c6

Carlsen's win against Michael Adams was perhaps the most mysterious of his games in London. Here Carlsen could more or less have equalised with

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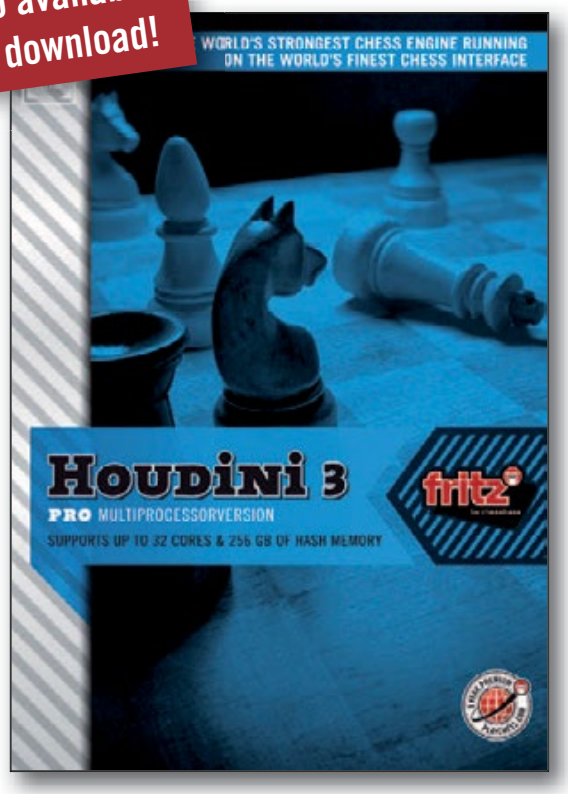
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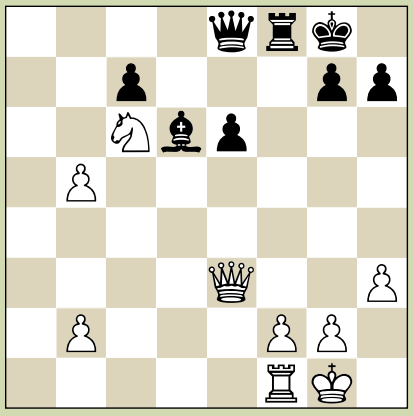
22...♕a8 23.♖a1 (23.♕xa8 ♖xa8 24.♘xb4 ♗xb4 25.♖d1 ♖b8 26.b6 cxb6 is very little if anything) 23...♕xa4 24.♖xa4 ♘xc6 25.bxc6 ♖b8 when if 26.♗d4 e5 27.♗c3 ♖b6 28.♖xe4 ♖xc6 29.♗xe5 ♖c1+ 30.♔h2 ♖c2 (or indeed 30...♗xe5+ 31.♖xe5 ♖c2 32.♖e8+ ♔f7 33.♖c8 ♖xb2, when White's extra pawn gives zero winning chances).

Instead Carlsen played:

22...♘d5?! 23.♕xe4 ♘xe3 24.♕xe3



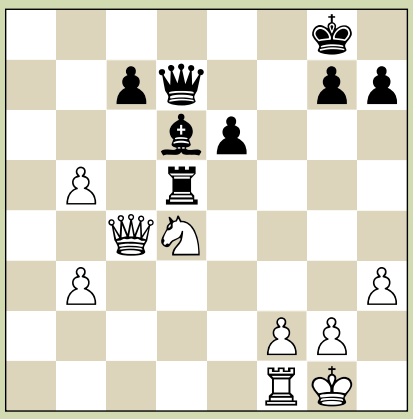
Although the extra pawn is doubled, Black's pawn structure is somewhat damaged, and if I had this position as Black against Mickey, I'd expect either to lose painfully or finally draw almost equally painfully. Indeed, had Carlsen been White against Adams then you imagine that he would have scored a good 'three quarters of a point'. But that isn't what happened at all.

24...♖f5 25.♘d4

Simply 25.♕e2 was natural and good. If then 25...♗c5 26.b4 ♗b6 27.♔h1 followed by advancing the f-pawn, the pressure against f2 disappears.

25...♖e5 26.♕b3 ♖d5 27.♕c4 ♕f7 Threatening 28...♕f4, but it's easily dealt with.

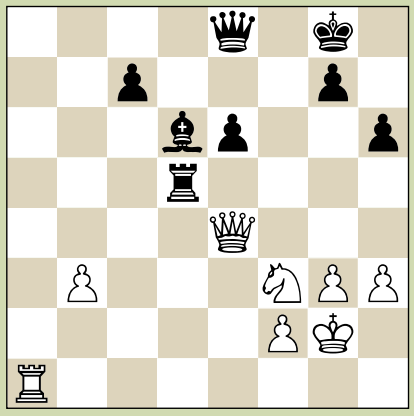
28.b3 ♕d7



29.♘f3?!

If 29.♘c6, the knight is indeed far from the white king, but it can't be that dangerous. On the other hand Adams' move was also perfectly good since the extra pawn didn't mean too much and he retains some pressure.

29...♖xb5 30.♖a1 ♖d5 31.g3 h6 32.♕e4 ♕e8 33.♔g2



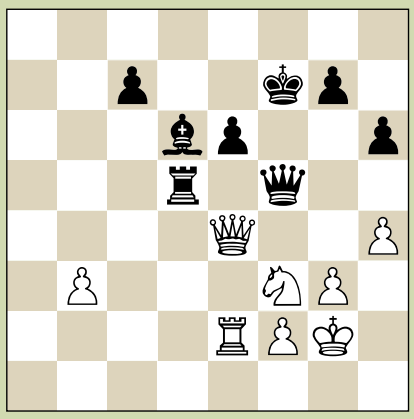
Up to here, it had gone perfectly well for White, and indeed a lesser player would certainly still have suffered against Adams. But with Carlsen's next move he threatened to get organised and for whatever reason – I suppose it was the 'Carlsen effect' – Adams began to drift alarmingly.

33...♔f7 34.♖a2?! Computers recommend 34.b4!, the point being that if 34...♕e7 or 34...♕d8, 35.♖a5! is distinctly unpleasant.

34...♕d8 35.♖e2 ♕f6

With his pieces coordinated, Carlsen has now equalised. Adams should perhaps now have played 36.♕c4 to prevent 36...♕f5? in view of 37.♘d4. Instead, another inaccuracy began to give Black hope of the advantage.

36.h4?! ♕f5! An annoying move to meet in time-trouble, though there were still good answers.



37.♕c4?

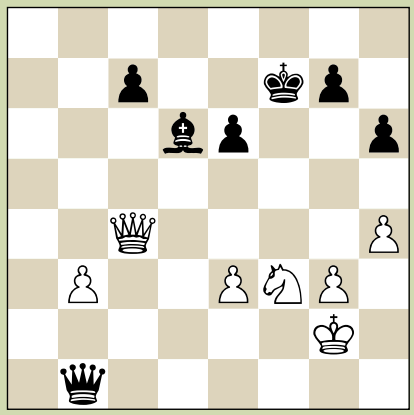
37.♘d2 was playable, when if 37...♖d3 38.♖e3! forces the exchange of rooks, since if 38...♖xd2?, 39.♖f3.

While 37.♕a4 looks like the best move, especially in time trouble, when if 37...♖d3 38.♕d7+ ♔g8 (38...♔f8 39.♕d8+ is a repetition and if 38...♔f6 39.♘d2 is getting dangerous for Black) 39.♕xe6+ ♕xe6 40.♖xe6 ♖xb3 41.♘e5! and White is absolutely fine.

37...♖d3! 38.♖e3!?

Weakening, but still just about playable. If 38.♕c6, 38...♕d5 39.♕xd5 exd5 is already scary for White, but 38.♘e1 ♕d5+ 39.♕xd5 ♖xd5 doesn't look too bad.

38...♖xe3 39.fxe3 ♕b1

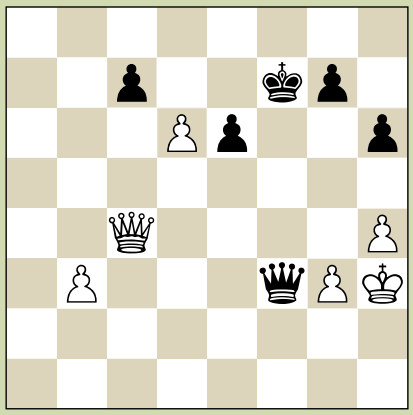


40.e4??

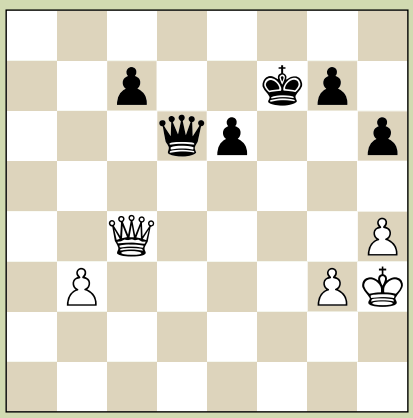
Already under heavy pressure, the last move before the time-control was a blunder.

Instead, 40.♘d4 was sensible, and if 40...♕e4+ 41.♔f2 the knight will be a stout defender. While apparently – you certainly couldn't actually play this in time trouble – 40.♘d2 may even be possible, when the obvious 40...♕b2 41.♕d3 ♗b4 can be met by 42.♕d7+, when (far from obviously) White has enough checks. Though 40...♕e1 is more unpleasant since the ending after 41.♕f1+ ♕xf1+ 42.♘xf1 and probably now 42...♗b4 is rather tenuous; while if 41.♘e4 ♕xe3 the knight is good but Black does have an extra pawn and can certainly play.

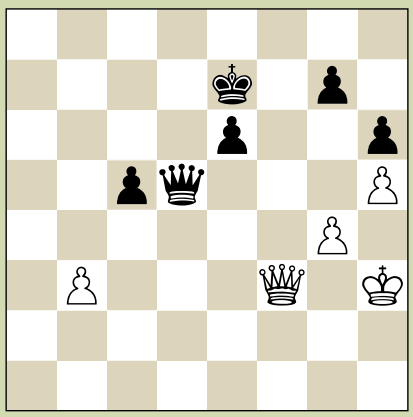
40...♕b2+ 41.♔h3 ♕f2 42.e5 ♕xf3 43.exd6



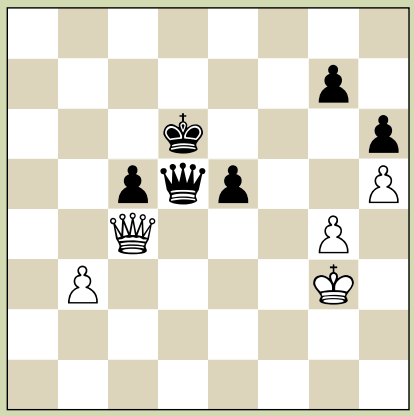
43...♕h1+!
Much stronger than 43...cxd6, when White could exchange pawns with 44.♕c7+ ♔g6 45.♕xd6 ♕xb3, though this is pretty grim, or perhaps try his luck with the passed b-pawn.
44.♔g4 ♕d1+ 45.♔h3 ♕xd6



46.h5?
White had to try 46.b4, to get some space and prevent the black queen from centralising on d5 or d4. I guess it's probably lost anyway, certainly in practice, but at least if 46...c6?! he can try 47.b5.
46...c5 47.g4 ♕d4 48.♕f1+ ♔e7 49.♕f3 ♕d5



With the queen so massively centralised in addition to the extra pawn it must certainly be winning now.
50.♕c3 e5 51.♔g3 ♔d6 52.♕c4!?
52.b4 c4 doesn't help, so Adams offered a pawn ending which Carlsen had to calculate with some care before accepting.

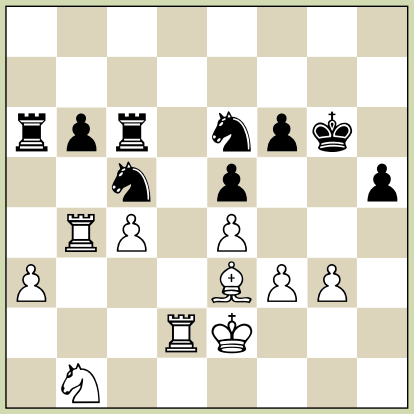


52...♕xc4! 53.bxc4 e4! 54.♔f4 e3!
The last two moves were the only way to win, but hardly difficult.
55.♔f3
If 55.♔xe3 ♔e5 56.♔f3 ♔d4 57.♔f4 ♔xc4 58.♔f5 ♔d5 59.♔g6 c4 60.♔xg7 c3 61.g5 hxg5 62.h6 c2 63.h7 c1♕ 64.h8♕ ♕a1+.
55...♔e6 56.♔e2 ♔f6 57.♔f3 ♔g5 58.♔xe3 ♔xg4 59.♔e4 ♔xh5 60.♔d5 g5 61.♔xc5 g4 62.♔d4 g3 63.♔e3 ♔g4
And White resigned in view of 64.c5 ♔h3!.

The technical part of this game after move 40 wasn't that interesting – Carlsen played it very well, but so could have lots of other top grandmasters. But the scarily intriguing thing was just how quickly a world class grandmaster went from an edge to equality to some difficulties to lost against him.

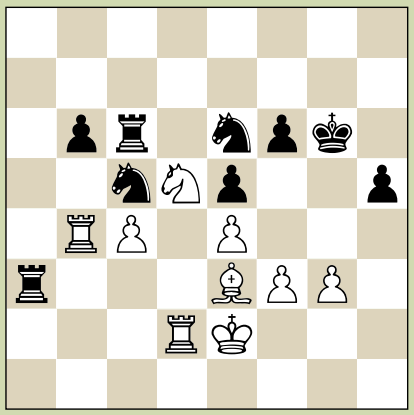
Of course the 'Carlsen effect' doesn't always work, and indeed in Sao Paulo in September, Fabiano Caruana turned round a difficult ending against Carlsen and actually won. But that instance is memorable precisely because it is so rare.

Usually, if he doesn't win a better endgame, Carlsen will certainly draw from a position of strength, and in the final round in London, the World Champion saved half a point at absolutely full stretch.



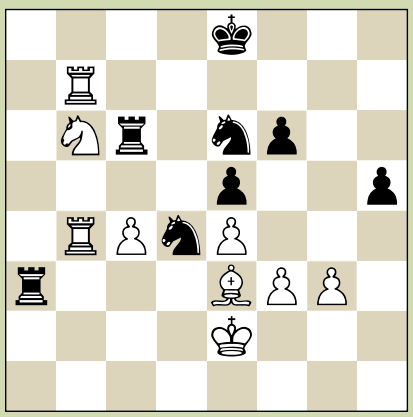
Carlsen-Anand
Round 9
position after 39....h5

They reached the first time control with:
40.♘c3!? ♖xa3 41.♘d5
Basically from here on in it was all tactics and both players rose to the occasion with moves which were often best and never disastrous. It's absolutely the territory of the chess engine and as always we must remember that the players were using their own onboard 'software', which processes patterns so much better, but exact lines of analysis so much worse than the silicon kind.
Here, fairly brief and from a resolutely human perspective, is what happened.

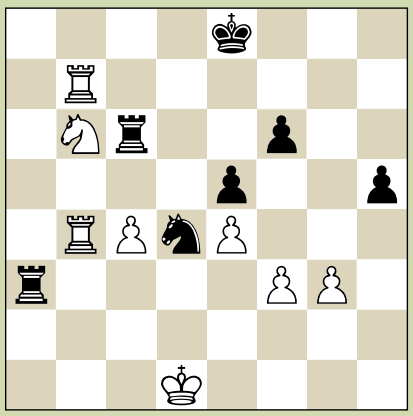


41...♔f7!
Of course the fork must be avoided and this is clearly the correct way to do so.

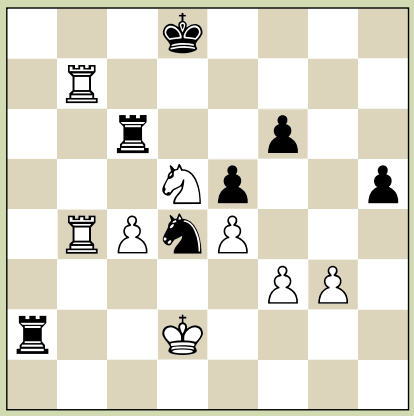
42.♘xb6
After a long think. If 42.♖xb6 ♖xb6 43.♘xb6 ♘b3 44.♖d7+ ♔e8 45.♖d6 ♘bd4+ 46.♔f2 ♔f7 (not 46...♖a2+ 47.♔f1 ♖a1+ 48.♔g2 ♖a2+ 49.♗f2! which greatly helps White) the knights are really active.
42...♘b3 43.♖d7+ ♔e8 44.♖b7
44.♖h7 was also interesting, when if 44...♘bd4+ White can even play 45.♔f2 ♖xe3 46.♘d5, when 46...♖xf3+ 47.♔g2 ♖b3 48.♖a4 leads to perpetual check.
44...♘bd4+



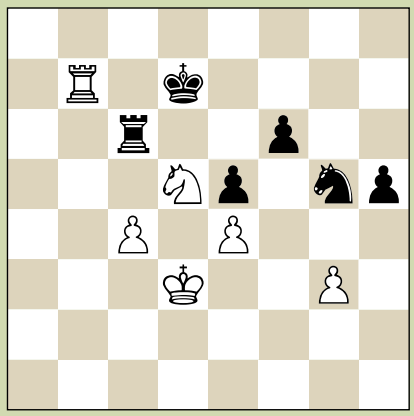
45.♗xd4
Now 45.♔f2?? ♖xe3 would simply lose for White.
45...♘xd4+ 46.♔d1



46...♔d8
A very difficult move to play. If 46...♖a1+, 47.♔d2 ♖a2+ 48.♔c3 ♘e2+ 49.♔b3 ♘c1+ is a pretty perpetual check, but White can play on with 48.♔c1.
47.♖d7+ ♔e8 48.♖b7 ♔d8 49.♘d5 ♖a1+ 50.♔d2 ♖a2+
By the time he came to a decision now, Carlsen had just five minutes to reach the time control on move 60.



51.♖b2 Extremely sensible under such pressure, but 51.♔c1 does look better (51.♔c3 ♘e2+ is the perpetual we've already seen), when if 51...♖c2+ 52.♔d1 ♖2xc4 53.♖xc4 ♖xc4 54.♖h7, there's no time for 54...♘xf3 due to 55.♖h8+ and 56.♘b6+, so the ending will be distinctly unpleasant for Black. Presumably Carlsen rejected ♔c1 for some other reason, but it's extremely easy to see ghosts in such a position.
51...♖xb2+ 52.♖xb2 ♘xf3+ 53.♔d3 ♘g5 54.♖b8+
54.♖b7! would have put Black under more pressure, but Carlsen had very likely underestimated 55...♔d6!.
54...♔d7 55.♖b7+



55...♔d6! Activating the king, after which it's easy for Black.
56.♘xf6 ♖a6 57.♘e8+ ♔c5 58.♖c7+ ♔b4 59.♖b7+ ♔c5 60.♖c7+ ♔b4 61.♖b7+ Draw.

And so Carlsen only drew the game but won the tournament and cemented the highest rating ever seen. What in conclusion can we say about his endgame prowess? He plays on for ever, calmly, methodically and, perhaps most important of all, without fear: calculating superbly, with very few outright mistakes and a good proportion of the 'very best' moves. This makes him a monster and makes many opponents wilt. ■

NEW IN CHESS

With great interest Jon Tisdall (centre) and John Nunn (right) watch how Jon Speelman conducts the black pieces in a blitz game with commentator Lawrence Trent.

Alexander Alekhine

The Lone King

The fourth World Champion's restored tombstone at the Montparnasse cemetery in Paris.

MAX EUWE CENTRE AMSTERDAM

Andrei Filatov, businessman and main sponsor of the Anand-Gelfand World Championship match in the Moscow Tretyakov Gallery, has a fascination for Alexander Alekhine. When the grave of the fourth World Champion was badly damaged in 1999, it was he who had the tomb restored to its old glory. Moreover, Filatov has indicated that he would like to stage a tournament to the memory of Alekhine in the Louvre. What do we really know about Alexander Alekhine, that troubled genius and master of romantic combinations? **Andrei Filatov** and his good friend, Israeli GM **Ilya Smirin**, share their thoughts on the first Russian World Champion.

Three days before the end of the 20th century, on December 28th, 1999, a sudden hurricane struck the suburbs of Paris. Sweeping through the Montparnasse Cemetery, it seemed to unleash particular fury on one tombstone, leaving a chessboard, a cross and an inscription in golden letters scattered on its cover: 'Alexander Alekhine – Russian and French chess genius'...

Above the inscription is Alekhine's bas-relief, made from white marble.

Alexander Alekhine, the man who loved cats. 'Extremely pragmatic, withdrawn and rational, and largely friendless in real life.'

Alexander Alekhine, the fourth World Chess Champion, a Russian who had spent half his life in France, winner of the legendary 1927 match in Buenos Aires against Capablanca, died undefeated. His life is a distillation of the entire 20th century, with its revolutions, world wars, upheavals and contradictions. Yet Alekhine remains enigmatic and impenetrable in everything except his great chess games.

This is what Max Euwe, who defeated Alekhine in 1935 – only to give back the crown to him two years later – said about Alekhine: 'For Alekhine, chess was his life and the World Champion's title was its goal and justification.'

The twists and turns of Alekhine's biography are as startling as his chess combinations. Born into a well-to-do noble Russian family, he was the son of a State Duma member and Marshal of the Nobility in Voronezh Gubernia and grandson of the wealthy industrialist Prokhorov, who owned Tryokhgornaya Manufaktura. Alekhine had a brilliant education. He went to a prestigious grammar school and graduated from the Imperial Law School. From childhood on, he spoke several languages, including French, which many Russian aristocrats spoke in their homes. We know that he exasperated other grammar school students by his outstanding intellectual skills and individualism – he knew everything, never did any homework, was completely indifferent to social life and totally steeped in chess.

By 1914, the 22-year-old Alekhine was already a famous 'maestro' who had taken third place at the international tournament in St Petersburg, behind Emanuel Lasker and Jose Raul Capablanca. Soon after this, the First World War broke out. Alekhine was not drafted into the Army for health reasons, but he went as a volunteer to the Galician front and commanded a Red Cross unit during the famous 'Brusilov breakthrough'. He carried the wounded from the battlefield, was shell-shocked twice and earned two St George medals, a Red Cross Badge of Distinction and an Order of Saint Stanislaus with swords. How many great chess players can you name who saw military action?

Alekhine was imprisoned on several occasions, serving time in a German prison after the start of the First World War (as a suspected Russian Army officer after winning a tournament in Germany) and in the NKVD (Soviet secret police) prison. The latter arrest happened in Odessa in 1919 after the revolution had deprived him of his wealth, his noble title and everything else except chess.

Perhaps chess protected him from a sense of apocalypse: Alekhine played for money at the famous Robin chess café in Odessa. Outside, violence raged. The city was constantly chang-

ing hands, there were shootings, pogroms and looting. But inside the café, chess lovers huddled over chessboards, an intellectual 'feast during a plague'. The official version is that Alekhine was arrested by Cheka officers at the café and brought to a prison basement on Ekaterininskaya Square. As he was the son of a nobleman, the maestro was sentenced to death by firing squad. But even among Bolshevik leaders there were chess enthusiasts who appreciated his genius. One of these enthusiasts was Ukrainian Prime Minister Christian Rakovsky. Alekhine owes his salvation to Odessa chess player Yakov Vilner, who made a personal call to Rakovsky.

Alekhine himself did not like talking about that episode in his life and preferred to keep silent. But after being released he quickly learnt to survive in Soviet Russia. He moved to Moscow and became an investigator with the Moscow police, then a translator with the Comintern (after all he was fluent in English, French and German). There, Alekhine met his future wife, Annalisa Ruegg, a 42-year-old journalist and Social Democrat from Switzerland. Their marriage would be short-lived and his son would grow up fatherless, but the maestro's taste in women remained unchanged and he would marry four times. He invariably married women much older than himself who would take good care of him.

His attempts to fit into Soviet reality did not mean that his chess career had stopped. He scored a brilliant victory in the first all-Russian Olympiad, which in retrospect was rightly regarded as the first Soviet championship.

Nobody knows how his life would have shaped up if he hadn't been denounced to the Cheka in 1920, accused of being a member of the counterintelligence, with links to Anton Denikin, one of the leaders of the White movement. The charge was retracted, but Alekhine, without waiting for the next arrest, left Soviet Russia, crossing the border into Latvia. He would never return.

Abroad, he went on to win tournaments quite brilliantly at Triberg, Budapest and The Hague in 1921. A year later, Alekhine finished second behind Capablanca in the London tournament. Before long, Paris would become his second home, just as it did for the majority of Russian émigrés. For a long time, he would remain a high-profile figure in the Russian émigré community, although he made overtures to Soviet Russia more than once.

Alekhine was one of the first chess professionals. It was not very common at the time to earn a living by playing chess. Not that chess was his only area of expertise. In 1925, he decided to devote time to writing a doctoral dissertation on the 'penitentiary system in China'. All these twists and turns in his life should not take away from his most important achievement, the titanic battle for the World Championship against the great Jose Raul Capablanca, known as the 'Human Chess Machine'. Capablanca did not lose a single game between 1916 and 1924. To overcome the great and invincible Cuban, Alekhine strove mightily to perfect his style, significantly improving his endgame and his skill in handling so-called 'simple' positions.

> 'A great tactician over the chessboard, Alekhine often painted himself into a corner in real life.'

He was not only up against it in terms of chess; the challenger had to pay the $10,000 cost of the match, a staggering sum for the time. Alekhine raised money by playing blindfold simultaneous displays for a huge audience. In 1924, he played 26 games simultaneously and topped this mark by one the following year. In the words of Capablanca, 'It seems that Alekhine had the most remarkable chess memory of any person that ever lived.' He staged simultaneous displays from an aeroplane and played games with live actors playing the chess pieces on a huge board.

But all this was not enough. Alekhine befriended the Argentine Ambassador to France, Marcelo Torcuato de Alvear, who was a chess enthusiast. This friendship stood him in good stead in 1927, when the former ambassador became President of Argentina and shelled out money for the historic match in Buenos Aires. The match was to be played until one of the players scored six wins. Many experts were sure that the Russian would not be able to win a single game. At 34 games, it was the longest World Championship match in the history of chess until the first Karpov-Kasparov match in 1984-85, which lasted 48 games and remained unfinished.

Shortly after the match began, Alekhine developed an inflammation of the periosteum. He asked the doctor to extract several teeth. The pain subsided and Alekhine continued to play. The 'Human Chess Machine' was defeated in the marathon match by the genius of combinations, a romantic endowed with incredible energy and demonstrating a breathtakingly beautiful game. The score was +6 –3 =25. After Capablanca had conceded the 34th game, Alekhine was carried through the streets of Buenos Aires. Congratulatory telegrams came to the Argentinean capital from all over the world.

The new chess king was given a hero's welcome in Paris. The Russian community in Paris was jubilant. The writer Alexander Kuprin devoted an essay called 'Chess' to Alekhine: 'It was great to be king, reigning not by hereditary law and not due to a fickle plebiscite but solely thanks to the sharpness of his brain.'

His triumph over Capablanca had some rather unexpected conse-

quences. A great tactician over the chessboard, Alekhine often painted himself into a corner in real life. A banquet at the Russian Club in Paris was held to celebrate his victory. The following day, some émigré newspapers quoted Alekhine as having said that he would like to see '... the myth about the invincibility of the Bolsheviks dispelled like the myth about the invincibility of Capablanca.'

Alekhine made no comments on the reports. But the Soviets reacted swiftly and furiously: 'After Alekhine's speech at the Russian Club, our relations with citizen Alekhine are over: he is our enemy and from now on we should see him only as an enemy,' wrote A. Krylenko in *Shakhmatny Listok*.

Alekhine received another blow, this time below the belt, when the same magazine printed statements by his brother Alexei: 'I condemn every anti-Soviet speech from whomever it may come, even, as in this case, if it is from my brother.' Alekhine loved his brother and sister, and he knew from firsthand experience how the Bolsheviks extracted such statements. Any hopes that he might have entertained about returning to Russia vanished, and all his links with his home country were severed.

Alekhine went on to score brilliant victories at tournaments: first place in San Remo (1930, 14 out of 15) and Bled (a full 5½ points ahead of his nearest rival, a record that has yet to be broken). Out of the 10 international tournaments the champion played before the end of 1933, he won eight and shared first place in the remaining two. There was a striking contrast between his behaviour in ordinary life and the style and temperament he displayed over the chessboard. Extremely pragmatic, withdrawn and rational, and largely friendless in real life, over the chessboard he was a tiger and a master of attack and effective combinations.

An interesting turn in his career occurred when he lost and then regained his world title. In late 1934, Alekhine accepted a challenge from Max Euwe and in 1935 shockingly lost the match. He had something of a breakdown, he drank a lot and perhaps felt lonely, as his brother Alexei and sister Varvara had stayed in Soviet Russia and there was little hope of seeing them again. Besides, the Soviet propaganda machine was doing its job and there was a split in the émigré community. For many, life in emigration meant poverty, while Bolshevik power seemed to be there to stay. The great composer Sergei Prokofiev – whom Alekhine not only met in St Petersburg and Paris, but also played chess against – made constant visits to the USSR with concert tours and in 1936 decided to stay there. During the match against Euwe, the newspaper Izvestia published a telegram from Alekhine: 'Not only as a chess worker of many years, but as a person who has realized the immense significance of what the USSR has achieved in all areas of cultural life, I extend my sincere greetings to the chess players of the USSR on the occasion of the 18th anniversary of the October Revolution. Alekhine.'

The letter triggered a storm of indignation. Émigré newspapers wrote that Alekhine had 'defected to the Soviets after being beaten.' But they had grossly misjudged him. Two years later in a return match, Alekhine confidently regained the chess crown. At the same time, he continued to lay down the groundwork for a possible visit to Russia.

In 1936, he twice appealed to the editorial office of the chess magazine *64*:

'27.VII.1936. I would be profoundly glad, by cooperating with your magazine after so many years, to contribute my mite to the development of chess in the USSR. I take this opportunity to send my greetings to the new steely Russia. A. Alekhine.'

And the second letter:

'London, 1.IX.1936. In connection with your question about my possible collaboration with your magazine, I deem it my duty to make the following statement.

1. It would be a great joy for me to again contribute as much as I can to the development of chess in the USSR.

2. I hope that my past mistakes, which I have now fully understood, will not be an insuperable obstacle to such collaboration.

'My regret over these mistakes is all the greater because in recent years my indifferent attitude to the gigantic Soviet achievements has been replaced with one of admiration. I repeat, it would bring me the greatest satisfaction to prove this attitude by deeds. A. Alekhine.'

These messages, in addition to his wish to be back in his homeland, reveal a clear awareness that it was in

MAX EUWE CENTRE AMSTERDAM

In the 1937 rematch Alekhine regained the world title. The old champion Max Euwe honoured the new champion with an impressive laurel wreath.

the USSR that chess, to which he had devoted all his life, was developing better than anywhere else. At the time his colleagues, outstanding Western grandmasters, regularly visited Moscow to take part in tournaments. Ex-World Champion Lasker took refuge in the Soviet capital from the 'brown plague' that was engulfing Europe. Alekhine clearly wanted to play in Moscow. Besides, many prominent émigrés were returning at that time. Kuprin returned, and soon died. The tragic return of the great Russian poet Marina Tsvetaeva and the trouble-free return of Sergei Prokofiev provide a tell-tale background. Many of those who returned home were immediately arrested and shot. But who knew the truth at the time?

Finally, in 1939, a contract was signed for a World Championship match between Alekhine and the top Soviet chess player at the time, the 'iron' Mikhail Botvinnik. The match was fixed up by Stalin personally. But it was not to be, as the Second World War broke out. The Nazi invasion of Poland occurred when Alekhine was leading the French team at the chess Olympiad in Argentina. Alekhine's reaction was commendable: he called for a boycott of the German team in the press and over the radio. As a result, technical draws were registered in three matches of the German team without play. Later, after Hitler attacked France, he did something that was startling for his age and status: he went to the front, this time around to defend the freedom of France. But for Alekhine, a Russian nobleman, this was a natural way to behave: it was a matter of honour to serve one's homeland and the country that gave him shelter. The quick end of hostilities between Germany and France marked the end of Alekhine's military service.

In occupied Paris, he had to work as a chess writer in the newspaper *Pariser Zeitung*, which would later play a nasty role in his life. Seeking to secure himself and his family, Alekhine applied to leave France, but the application was turned down. It soon became clear on what terms Alekhine and his wife could live under occupation: the occupiers wanted the champion to continue playing in tournaments in German territories. The German authorities 'commissioned' several chess articles to him. In 1941, the *Pariser Zeitung* ran a series of articles 'Arian and Jewish Chess', under the banner heading 'A Psychological Study by the World Chess Champion Dr Alekhine based on Chess Experience and Proving that the Jews Lack Conceptual Power and Daring'. These anti-Semitic articles were never forgiven. In 1943, Alekhine was allowed to leave France. Spain and Portugal gave him what he thought would be temporary refuge.

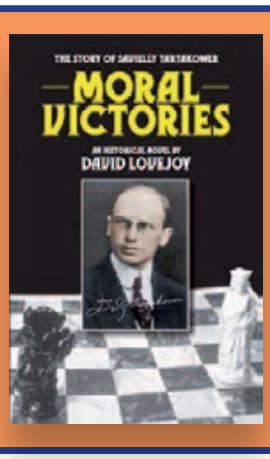
> 'These messages reveal a clear awareness that it was in the USSR that chess was developing better than anywhere else.'

After the war, Alekhine was subjected to ostracism and accused of collaboration with the Nazis following an ultimatum presented by the American Chess Federation. In late 1945, he was invited to tournaments in London and Hastings, but the invitations were promptly rescinded: Max Euwe and American chess players threatened to boycott the tournament if Alekhine took part. The maestro wrote an open letter pleading that he had written nothing of the kind and that his three-year silence and the fact that he took part in tournaments organized by Nazis was merely an attempt to survive and save his American-Jewish wife Grace Wishar, who was practically a hostage to his loyalty: 'played chess in Germany and in German-occupied countries only because this was... the price I paid for my wife's freedom.'

'These articles that appeared in 1941 during my stay in Portugal, and which I first read in Germany, reprinted in *Deutsche Schachzeitung*, had hardly any words written by myself.

'My dedication to the art of chess, the respect I have always shown for the talent of my colleagues, in short, all my pre-war professional life should have made it clear to people that the intentions in *Pariser Zeitung* were all false.

'I am sorry that I am unable to come to London to personally confirm the above. A. Alekhine, Madrid, 6 December 1945'



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Glory days. Alexander Alekhine (first row, middle chair) surrounded by the participants and officials of the Bradley Beach tournament in 1929. The World Champion took first place with eight wins and only one draw.

(According to the Oxford Companion to Chess, the manuscript of the articles, in Alekhine's handwriting, were found among his wife's effects in 1956 –ed.).

However, after the war, nobody would listen to him. The articles were indeed disgusting and at the time few people cared whether he had actually written them and whether saving the life of an elderly Jewish lady was worth it. A committee was set up under Max Euwe and there were suggestions that Alekhine would be stripped of his titles and subjected to a boycott, and that he should not be invited to any more tournaments or allowed to publish articles.

But the USSR was in no hurry to declare a boycott. He now pinned his hopes on his former home country. Public opinion in the Soviet Union gradually changed from 'Alekhine is our enemy' to 'Alekhine is our first champion'. In 1946, the long-awaited match against Botvinnik, postponed because of the Second World War, was finally set to take place. It was to be held in London. By that time, Alekhine was no longer his old powerful self. But he clearly wanted that duel. It was a glimmer of hope in his mirthless post-war life. He who had been applauded by the whole world was now a pauper. He did not even have money to buy food and cigarettes. Poverty, the stigma of being a Nazi collaborator, and all of a sudden a chance to come back to big-time chess. FIDE officially approved the match on 23 March 1946. On the morning of 25 March, Alekhine was found dead in his hotel room in Estoril, Portugal. The elderly maestro was found sitting in a chair at a table with chess pieces. Even death came as another unexpected trap. To this day, there is nothing to prove that it was a natural death, which is how the newspapers reported it. In any case, the chess king remained undefeated.

Alexander Alekhine was a loner, a withdrawn and tormented person who perhaps fully trusted only his Siamese cat Chess, which sometimes sniffed the board before the games. Psychological dramas, political detective novels or historical opera could be written about Alexander Alexandrovich. He was difficult to fit into the Procrustean bed of common cliché, for he was both fearless and pusillanimous, cynical and sincere, very concentrated and absent-minded, a hard-edged chess fighter and an opportunist at the same time. As Leo Tolstoy said about the fate of artists, poets and creators: 'The poet takes away the best in his life and puts it in his works.' Alexander Alekhine's true life and fate are in his games, no matter how hard we try to sort out the contradictions of his life. A great chess genius of Russia and France who defended both countries in the battlefield and over the chessboard has left a priceless legacy. ■

PHOTOS: TASHKENT2012.FIDE.COM

Like a Tale from One Thousand and One Nights

The second leg of the FIDE Grand Prix ended in another three-way tie with none of the London top-finishers among the winners. In Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, Sergey Karjakin, Alexander Morozevich and Wang Hao each collected 140 GP points after a spellbinding finish. Rustam Kasimdzhanov travelled to his native city anxious to do well on his home turf and nervous about the awe-inspiring opposition. He need not have worried. In fairy-tale surroundings he was the only participant to remain unbeaten in his best super-tournament ever.

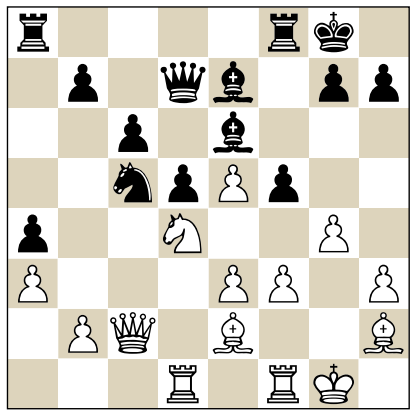
Tashkent. If you want to discover the spirit of the Orient, there is no better place. A big city and still somehow very compact. Bustling with activity and at the same time amazingly quiet, Tashkent has something unreal about it, as if it just came out of the pages of 'One Thousand and One Nights'. There are bazaars, which haven't changed much in a thousand years, and if you come at the right time, there are cherries to kill for. There's the sun, which always shines, and a breath-taking mountain view on a clear day. Think all this and you are just beginning to get an impression of the city that I was born in. The only thing that Tashkent was sadly lacking was a chess super- tournament.

A detailed story of how the Grand Prix came to Tashkent would probably take up most of the space of this issue. Let me say that the most amazing thing is that it was not my idea. You see, I never found it easy to play at home – and this feeling grew even stronger when Vishy beat me several times in a row in front of my home crowd in an exhibition match in Tashkent in 2011. This match attracted some serious attention, and among the people who came to Tashkent was Kirsan Nikolaevich, who held talks with people of influence, all of whom seemed to agree that a GP event would be a great thing for Uzbekistan.

I took it as a mixed blessing. Ever since I started playing chess, I dreamt of a couple of things: I wanted to play a World Championship match and I wanted a super-tournament in Tashkent. But now I knew how tough it is to lose on your home turf, and having taken a look at the list of GP participants (which started with Caruana and Karjakin, and ended with my own name) I understood how easy it would be to lose a game or five.

I took a deep breath, and spoke to my wife, Firuza. 'That sounds like real trouble,' she told me. 'You are going to need plenty of advice before it's all over. You need to get whatever opening help you can get. You need Anton Filippov as a second. And, needless to say, I'm going with you.' I called a good friend for opening help, asked Anton to be my second, and bought a plane ticket for Firuza from Frankfurt to Tashkent. At the time I did not yet realize that this GP would become one of the most beautiful events of my life.

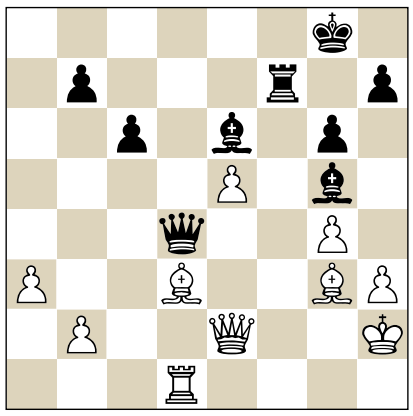
The lavish opening ceremony concluded with the drawing of lots. In my first game I got black against Mamedyarov who, as I'm sure you have noticed, has shown some outstanding results lately, especially with white. Needless to say, I was concerned.



Mamedyarov-Kasimdzhanov
position after 23.g4

I must have been somewhat careless in the opening, because quite suddenly I was facing serious long-term problems. White's threat is to get f4-f5 going after the pressure on f5 and e6 forces Black to give up some more ground. I thought long and hard. And then my hand more

or less on its own played **23...♘b3!** Amazingly enough, I was quite critical of this move during and immediately after the game. But in fact, at least in practice, it must be the completely right choice: at the cost of a mere pawn Black gets easy play. For the first time in the game Shakh started thinking... 23... ♖f7, followed by ...♖af8, was another option, essentially connected to an exchange sac on f5 some time later... **24. ♘xb3** After the game my opponent explained that he had very much wanted to play 24.♘xf5, but after 24...♗xf5 25. gxf5 ♕xf5 (25...♗c5 is the weird computer move, so I guess it must be good ☺) 26.♕xf5 ♖xf5 27.e4 dxe4 28.♗c4+ ♔h8 29.fxe4 ♖xf1+ 30.♔xf1 ♖d8 the position seemed pretty much a draw. None too pleased, Shakhriyar took the pawn. **24...axb3 25.♕xb3 ♖f7** 25... ♗c5 looked reasonable, but I was decidedly attracted to the plan of doubling my rooks on the f-file. **26.♕c2 ♖af8 27.♗d3 g6** I did not have too much time left, so I tried to keep it simple. Also possible was 27...♗d8 28.♕e2 ♗b6 29.♔g2. **28.♗g3** 28.♗f4 looked critical, but Black has some interesting options: 28...fxg4 29.hxg4 g5!? 30.♗g3 h5 with a complete mess. **28...fxg4 29.fxg4 ♗g5** Somewhere around here I started wondering what was going on. Shakh was making his moves instantly, despite having maybe an hour left on his clock, and my position was looking better and better with every move... **30.♕e2 d4 31.♖xf7 ♖xf7 32.exd4 ♕xd4+ 33.♔h2**



And here I was going to produce the decisive 33...♗f4, but then I stopped, looked around and felt this would be too easy. And then I suddenly saw 34. ♗f5!!, and what a painful beginning of the tournament that would have been! **33...♖d7! 34.♗c2 ♕xb2** And some moves later this game finished in a draw.

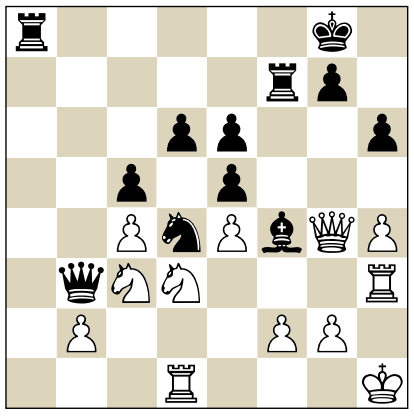
At the press conference after the game Shakhriyar spoke freely about chess and life, of how he finds the classical time-controls too long – so long, in fact, that when he was a kid he would leave the tournament venue during the games to go and play some soccer. I looked at him in admiration and thought how completely different he was from any other top player I know. In Tashkent, he said, he spent time looking at paintings. Looking at paintings! We played in a new Art Gallery, which was built in 2004. An impressive building by itself, it also features some of the best art to be found in Uzbekistan. As the tournament progressed, I started arriving at the playing hall some 15 minutes early, and would roam through the quiet rooms of the gallery, gathering my thoughts.

The first round always creates a certain momentum, which sometimes lasts throughout the whole tournament. Gata Kamsky and Leinier Dominguez lost to Alexander Morozevich and Sergey Karjakin respectively, and never really got going after that. A couple of days later it became clear that Boris Gelfand wasn't in his best form either. As always, he gave it 100 per cent, sat there and fought long and difficult games, but things just wouldn't go his way. The year must have been exhausting for him, having had to prepare and play against Vishy Anand, followed by the Olympiad and then the London GP. Yet I feel certain that Boris will come back for the London Candidates' coming March, refreshed and motivated, a force to be reckoned with.

The remaining nine players were all in contention for first place. In the end only one point made the difference between first and last place. It's fair to say that every single game was decisive.

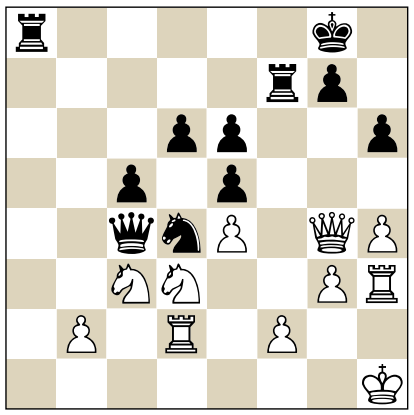
However, all this was difficult to predict after the first round. The main thought that was vaguely going through my mind, was given shape by Peter Svidler, who joined me for dinner that day. 'Ten games left', he said. Exactly. Ten games left.

Peter had serious chances to score more than he did.



Dominguez-Svidler
position after 37.♔h1

Things went wrong for White some moves earlier, and now Svidler could have cashed in with **37...♕xc4!** The game saw 37...♕c2, which was good, but not decisive. **38.g3** Otherwise White is just lost. But now Black has two ways to win, both of which are far from obvious: **38...♗d2!** The human way. The machine indicates 38...♗c1! 39.♘xc1 ♖xf2 40.♖h2 ♖f1+ 41.♔g2 ♘c2!!, with a juicy fork to follow. **39. ♖xd2**



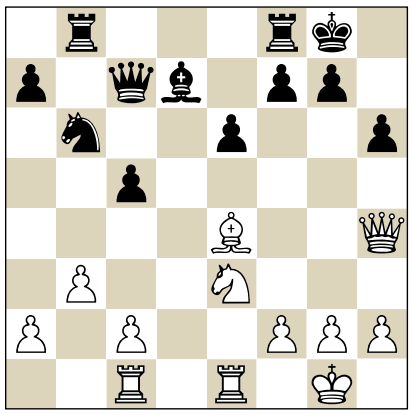
39...♖f3!!
This is a tough move to find at the end of the line. White is a piece up, but Black... Black is better coordinated ☺.

After the game, and none too pleased, Svidler allowed himself a piece of

FIDE President Kirsan Nikolaevich Ilyumzhinov with the field of the Tashkent GP: Morozevich, Dominguez, Kamsky, Mamedyarov, Leko, Wang Hao, Caruana, Karjakin, Svidler, Gelfand, Kasimdzhanov and Ponomariov.

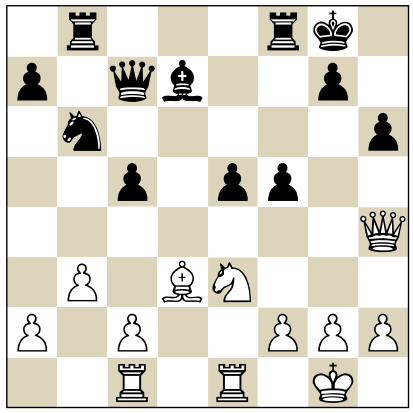
chicken. Otherwise, he basically lived on yoghurt and vegetables every third day. I cannot help wondering how strong he would be on a proper diet, but then again he's been one of the very best for so many years – maybe he knows what he's doing? ☺

In the beginning Morozevich seemed in top form, and after he beat Fabiano Caruana from an equalish looking opening, I started suspecting this could be one of those tournaments in which Moro cleans up and we all just look on in amazement. He seemed very comfortable in Tashkent, usually eating out with his second and visiting bazaars to buy some fruit. Occasionally he'd come to my room, where we'd drink tea and talk of this and that, and I'd stop to think just how friendly an atmosphere we had in Tashkent. He won four games, more than anybody else, but also stumbled a couple of times.



Ponomariov-Morozevich
position after 20.b3

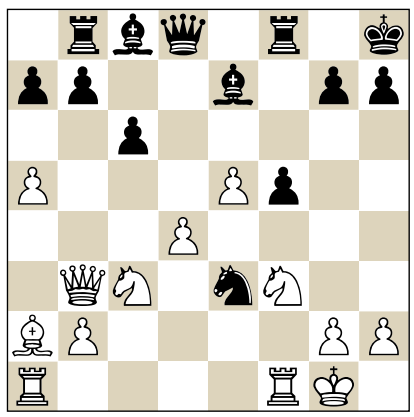
This game was played in Round 5, after the rest day. White got nothing much from the opening, and now Black could choose from reasonable plans like 20...♖bd8 21.♖cd1 ♗c8 or 20...c4!? 21.bxc4 (21.♖cd1 ♗c6) 21...♕c5, which both look pretty solid. Instead, Morozevich unleashed the aggressive **20...f5?! 21.♗d3 e5**



But after **22.f3!** it soon became clear that Black had only weakened his position, without really getting much play. White won pretty smoothly after **22...♖be8 23.♖cd1 ♔h8 24.c3 ♖f6 25.♗c2 ♗e6 26.♖d2 a5 27.c4 ♘c8 28.♗xf5!**

Ruslan continued to play a very decent tournament and only spoiled his chances to join the winners in his last-round game against Karjakin. What happened in his game against Mamedyarov, however, I cannot possibly explain.

PHOTOS: TASHKENT2012.FIDE.COM



Mamedyarov-Ponomariov
position after 20...♘e3

A complex opening led to this rather unclear position. The rest of the game is mystifying... **21.♘e2** Come again? 21.♖fe1 f4 22.♘d1 would be about equal. **21...f4** What's wrong with 21...♘xf1, please?? **22.♖f2 ♘g4 23.♖ff1 ♘e3 24.♖f2 ♘g4 25.♖ff1 ♘e3** Draw.

Upset as Morozevich must have been after his loss against Ponomariov, he played a good game against Dominguez the next day.

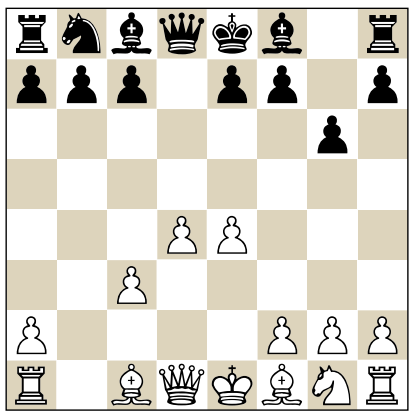
NOTES BY
Alexander Morozevich

GI 4.1 – D85
Alexander Morozevich
Leinier Dominguez
Tashkent 2012 (6)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5

The Grünfeld Defence is currently experiencing one of its regular booms, and its employment can and must be expected of any top player. My opponent is an old-timer in this opening, and, in view of Leinier's enormous experience, before the game it was not at all easy to decide to engage in a theoretical dispute. Nevertheless, after weighing up the risk involved, it was decided to go in for a critical battle.

4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3



6...♗g7

I have always found it hard to understand the reason why 6...♗g7 is far more popular than 6...c5. After all, by beginning with 6...c5 Black rules out at least three options for White: 7.♕a4+, 7.♗b5+ and 7.♗a3. True, looking at all these moves, it is not clear whether it is worth preventing them ☺.

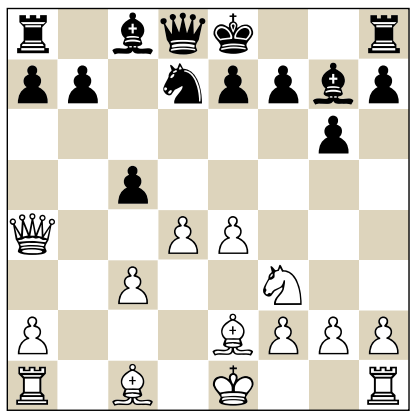
7.♕a4+

It is hard to understand how, after putting his queen where it can be attacked with gain of tempo, White intends to fight for an advantage. On the other hand, in the games played Black has so far demonstrated the worst ways of responding, and it was mainly on this that my preparation was based.

7...♘d7

In principle any move apart from 7...♔f8 should equalize, but principles are one thing, and concrete moves are quite another.

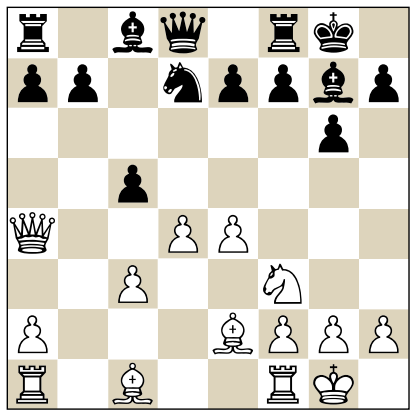
8.♘f3 c5 9.♗e2



After the game Miton-Ivanchuk, Cuba 2007, this set-up was shelved, but, strangely enough, this is the only line where White can pose problems, especially for an unprepared opponent.

9...0-0 10.0-0

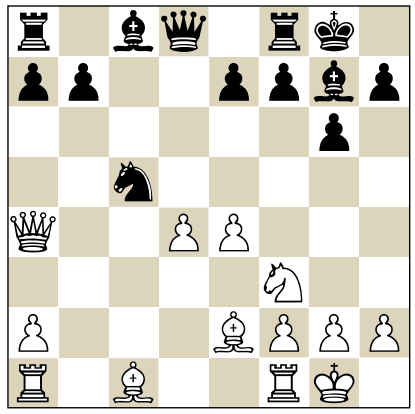
A critical position for the assessment of 7...♘d7 has been reached, where with his next move Black will determine the further pattern of the battle.



10...a6

After a 20-minute think my opponent preferred to leave the pattern undetermined, and at the same time to check what I had in mind with regard to Ivanchuk's game. Vassily played in the most 'direct' way – 10...cxd4 11.cxd4 ♘c5, and after the insipid 12.♕c2?! Black can achieve a comfortable position by both 12...♘e6 and 12...♗g4.

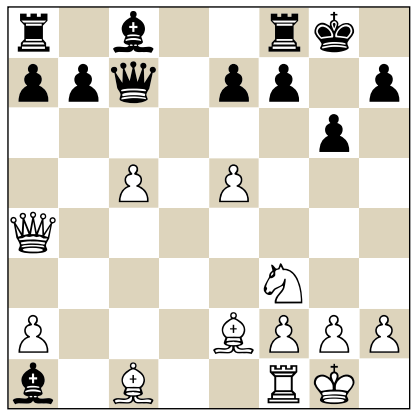
Two weeks after this game, at the rapid tournament in Beijing, Levon Aronian performed the role of inquisitor and this is what we produced:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

12.dxc5 (it is uncomfortable to attach an exclamation mark to what is essentially the only move) 12...♗d7?! (a dubious choice) 13.♕a3 ♗xa1 14.e5 (this position can arise by transposition after 12...♗xa1 13.e5 ♗d7 14.♕a3) 14...♗c6 15.♗f4 ♗xf3 16.♗xf3 ♕d4 17.g3! – Black faces a difficult fight for a draw, and in the game after 17...♗c3 18.♗xb7 ♗b4 I should have chosen 19.♕a6!, when White's pressure is very appreciable.

Thus the critical position arises after 12...♗xa1 13.e5, where, as we have seen, the ...♗c8-d7-c6 manoeuvre is inadequate, 13...f6 also gives White a free hand, the natural 13...♗c3 leads almost by force to a difficult position, and therefore only 13...♕c7! leaves the question open.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

There follows 14.♕f4 ♗c3 15.♕e3 ♕a5 – not the most natural move, but forced. Here White has a mass of different attacking options, but if he does not want a draw in the variation 16.♕h6 f6 17.♗c4+ e6 18.h4 ♕xc5 19.h5 ♕d4 20.hxg6 ♕d7 21.♗a3 ♕g7 22.gxh7+ ♔h8 23.♕xg7+

Alexander Morozevich listens to Leinier Dominguez in the post-game press conference hosted by Anastasiya Karlovich.

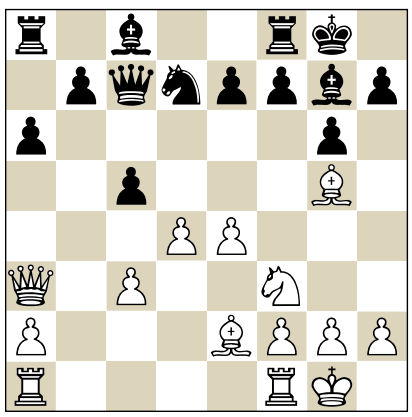
: TASHKENT 2012.FIDE.COM

♔xg7 24.♗xf8+ ♔xf8, the remaining attempts to achieve more involve a considerable risk also for White.

11.♕a3

A logical reaction to 10...a6. White prevents ...b7-b5 and tries to provoke the exchange ...c5xd4 by putting pressure on the c5-pawn.

11...♕c7 12.♗g5



12...♖e8

In the same exaggeratedly unhurried manner. The computer votes for 12...♘f6 13.e5 ♘d5 (or 13...♘e4, it sees no difference), but a human would not want to go in for such a shaky position.

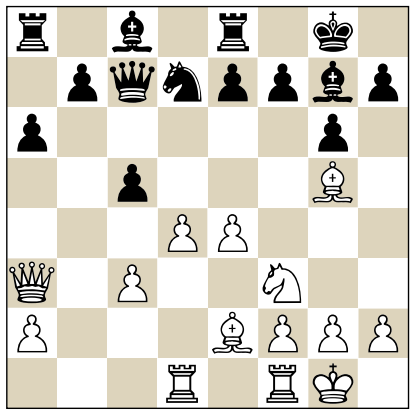
In my view, 12...b6 is more logical, and after 13.♗xe7 ♖e8 14.♗h4 ♖xe4 15.♗g3 ♕c6 16.♗d3 ♖e8 17.♖fe1 ♗b7 18.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 19.♗xa6 ♗xa6 20.♕xa6 ♖a8 Black has good chances of forcing White onto the defensive.

If 13.♕c1 ♗b7 14.♕e3 the position bears a surprising resemblance to the 8.♖b1 variation (after 7.♘f3 c5 8.♖b1 0-0 9.♗e2 b6 10.0-0 ♗b7 11.♕d3), and all the ideas that are present in that variation also operate here.

12...e5 forces White to determine the central position by 13.d5, but with the bishop on g5 this looks to be in his favour – the bishop will go to e3, the best position for play on both wings, whereas after the bishop has gone to g3 the move ...e7-e5 gains in strength – with a 'miserable' bishop White does not really want to close the centre. This was why I played

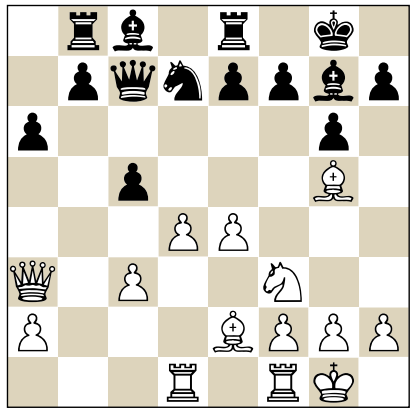
13.♖ad1

Not prematurely determining the position of the bishop on g5.



13...♖b8?!

Ambitious and not especially good. Play in the preceding manner was more in the spirit of the position – 13...b6, and if for example 14.d5, then 14...♘e5 with normal play (if 15.♘d2 there is 15...c4).



14.d5?!

White did not sense that this was a good moment to switch the bishop to g3 – 14.♗h4! would have set Black serious problems. During the game I lacked the tactical vision to see that after 14...e5 (or 14...b5 15.♗g3 e5) 15.♗g3 b5 16.dxe5 ♘xe5 17.♖d5 White was 'in passing' attacking the c5-pawn. White has the advantage after 17...c4 18.♖fd1 ♗b7 19.♖xe5, or 18...f6 19.♘xe5 fxe5 20.♕c5±.

Weaker is 14...b6 15.♗g3 e5 16.dxe5 ♘xe5 17.♘xe5 ♗xe5 18.f4 ♗d6 19.♕b2 c4 20.♕d2 ♗f8 21.f5 ♕c5+ 22.♔h1 ♖b7 23.♗f2 ♕c6 24.♗d4 with an obvious advantage.

14...♗h6 is an interesting try, but it allows too great a choice of promising continuations: 15.♘e1, 15.♖fe1, or even the geometrical 15.♗g3 ♗f4 16.♕c1! ♗xg3 17.fxg3 intending ♕h6, when White's initiative may become dangerous – 17...cxd4 18.♕h6 d3 19.♖xd3 f6 20.g4.

14...e6

Very provocative; 14...♘e5 was steadier. After 14...e6 White has a mass of tempting possibilities, but as a rule it is difficult to choose the strongest out of many options. In the game I chose a logical continuation, but one insufficient to gain an advantage. However, even now, after calm analysis at home, I find it difficult to say how White should have correctly responded to 14...e6.

15.dxe6 ♖xe6

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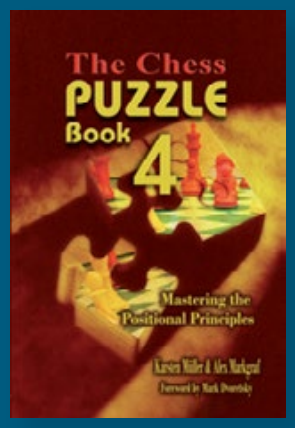

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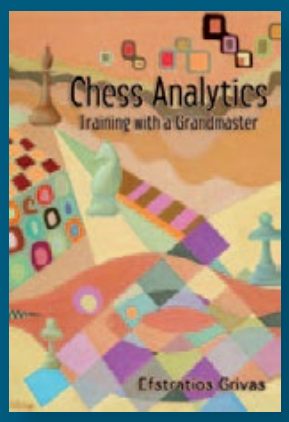

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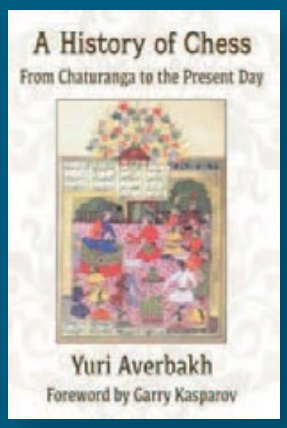

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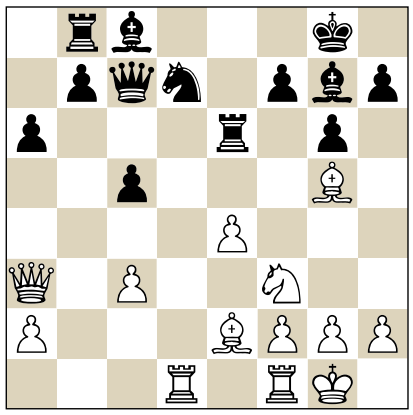
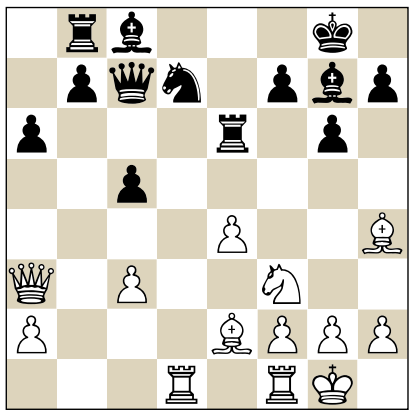
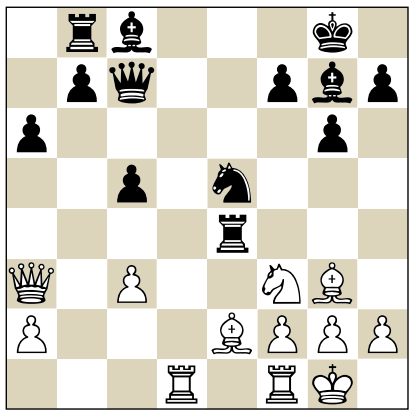


16.♗h4 16.♕c1! was the correct formulation of the idea. White retains some advantage after 16...♖xe4 (16...b5 17.♗f4 ♘e5 18.♗g3!) 17.♗d3 ♖e8 18.♖fe1 ♘e5 (the only move, which is not easy to realize in advance) 19.♘xe5 ♖xe5 20.♗f4 ♗g4 21.♗e2 ♗e6.



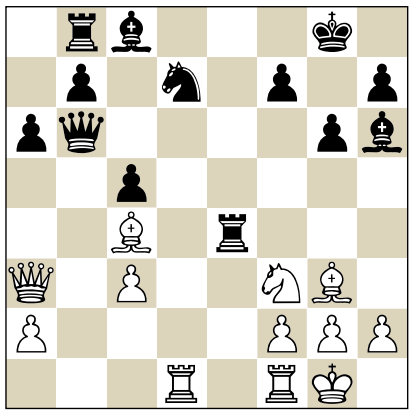
16...♗h6?? A blunder, after which Black's position immediately lacks harmony. We have already considered a similar idea in the note to White's 14th move, but there, with the white pawn on d4 and the black pawn on e7, the position was comparatively closed, whereas now it is not, and Black can no longer permit himself to play so 'unsolidly'. Therefore, 16...♖xe4 17.♗g3 ♘e5 was the only correct response.



During the game both of us thought that this was rather dangerous, but concrete analysis shows that, because the queen is out of play on a3, it is not at all easy to exploit the pin. 18.♕b2 (the strongest move) 18...♗f5 19.♗d3 ♘xd3 (Black can hold on after 19...♖g4!?) 20.♖xd3 ♕c8 21.♗xb8 ♕xb8 – White is perhaps slightly better, but Black retains counter-chances.

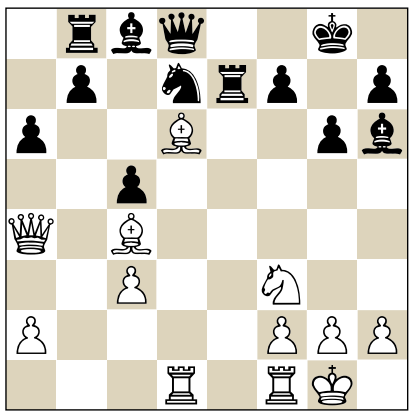
17.♗c4
With simple moves White begins what is essentially the finishing-off.

17...♖xe4 18.♗g3 ♕b6
It was possibly only here that Black noticed that 18...♗f4 would lose to 19.♗xf7+!.
18...♖f4 19.♖fe1 was also cheerless, but it would have prolonged the resistance.



19.♕a4!
The last precise move – for complete happiness the queen is also included in the play. Major loss of material is now inevitable.

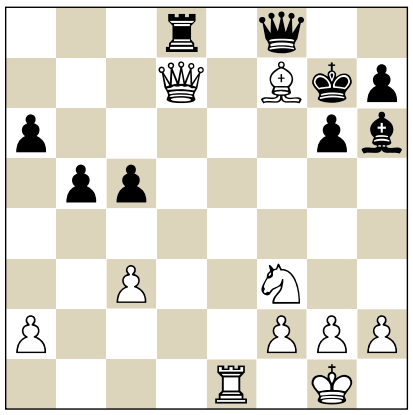
19...♖e7 20.♗d6 ♕d8



21.♗xe7

Here 21.♗b3 is the first computer line, but I thought that I had already strengthened my position sufficiently ☺.

21...♕xe7 22.♖fe1 ♕f8 23.♖xd7 b5 24.♗xf7+ ♔g7 25.♕d1 ♗xd7 26.♕xd7 ♖d8



27.♕c7

A subtlety, which I had to calculate when making my 21st move.

27...♖c8 28.♕b7 ♖b8

The rook has been lured onto a bad square, and after

29.♕e7 Black resigned.

Apart from a competitive success, my final score of 6½ out of 11 and a share of 1st-3rd places were memorable to me for another reason – for the first time in more than ten super-tournaments with an evenly strong field, I managed to score more than +1. Plus 2 is a small step, but for me it is like a giant leap across an abyss. Thank you, Tashkent!

■ ■ ■

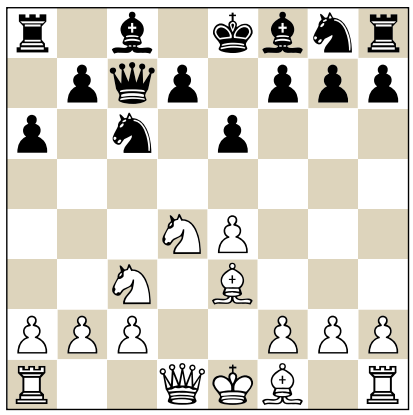
The pre-tournament rating favourites, Karjakin and Caruana, led the pack after seven rounds. Fabiano Caruana quickly recovered from an early loss and won several games in his inimitable style, when nothing much happens, but his opponents start making mistakes after many hours of play.

Sergey Karjakin got there largely due to an unbelievable shot (53.♖c6!!) against Morozevich, which definitely qualifies for 'The Move of the Tournament'.

NOTES BY
Sergey Karjakin

SI 24.6 – B49
Sergey Karjakin
Alexander Morozevich
Tashkent 2012 (7)

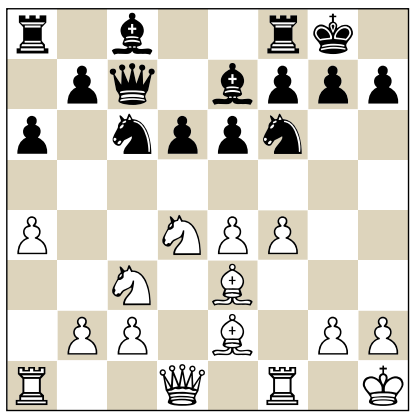
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘c6 5.♘c3 ♕c7 6.♗e3 a6



7.♗e2

I had already once played 7.♗e2 in a rapid game with Kurnosov, but I was hoping that nevertheless this would be a surprise for Alexander, since I have mainly played 7.♕d2.

7...♘f6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.f4 d6 10.a4 0-0 11.♔h1



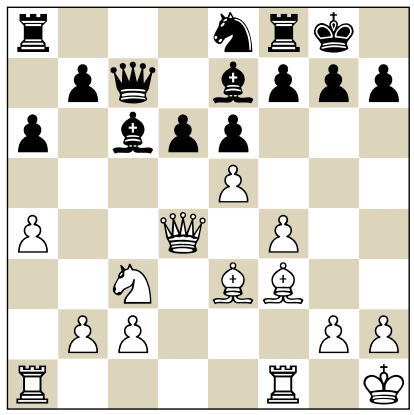
11...♘xd4

But of course I was the first to be surprised! Instead of playing the main move 11...♖e8 Black deviates. I desperately tried to remember what Kasparov and Nikitin had to say about this move in their book on the Scheveningen, but, on failing to remember anything, I simply began making natural moves.

12.♕xd4 ♗d7 13.e5 ♘e8

At first I could not believe that such a retreat onto the back rank could be correct, but the more I delved into the position the more I realized that it was difficult for White to pose problems, especially without preparation.

14.♗f3 ♗c6

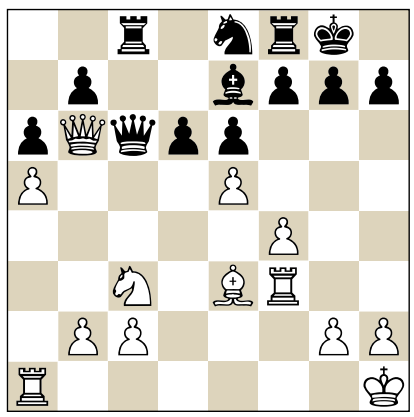


Here I was frankly upset by the course of the game, since I realized that objectively Black was alright, and some 40 minutes had been wasted in vain, whereas my opponent was obviously following his analysis. After making the text move I was already beginning to think that it was time to play with a certain accuracy and carefully reduce the game to a draw ☺.

15.♕b6

Great was my surprise when after the game I discovered that the variation with 11...♘xd4 and 12...♗d7 had occurred many times in the games of Volodya Potkin – who in this tournament was my opponent's second!

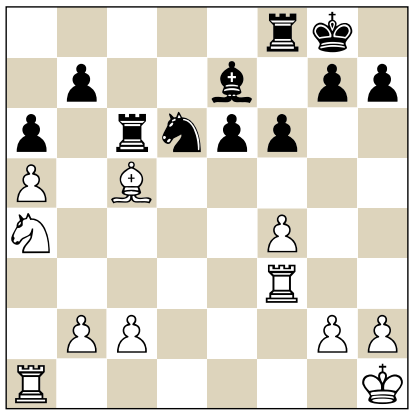
15...♗xf3 16.♖xf3 ♖c8 17.a5 ♕c6



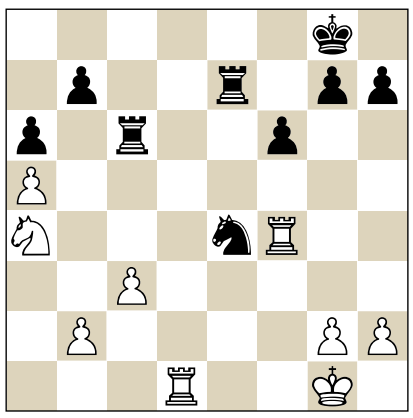
18.♘a4

To maintain equality it is possible that

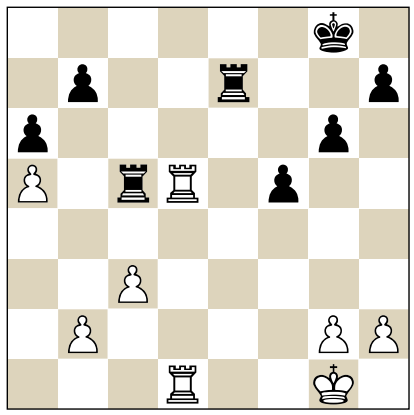
18.♕b4 was slightly more accurate.
18...f6 19.exd6 ♘xd6 20.♕xc6 ♖xc6 21.♗c5



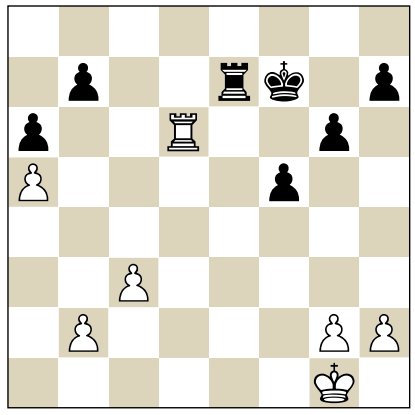
The outcome is that by making natural moves Black has obtained slightly the better endgame. If at this moment I had been told that I would win the game, I would have been very surprised!
21...♖e8 22.♖d1 ♘e4 23.♗xe7 ♖xe7 24.c3 e5 25.♔g1 exf4 26.♖xf4



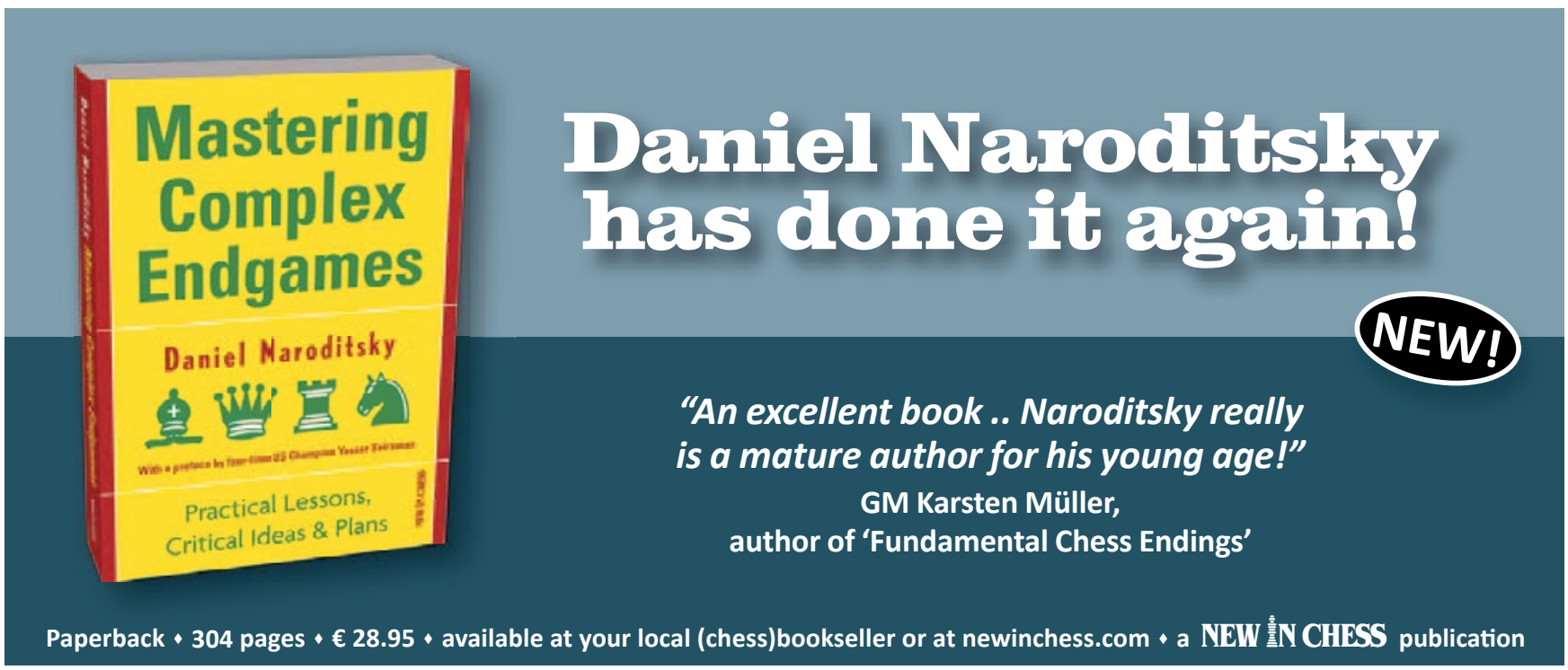
It is probable that Black did not play very successfully in this section of the game, and I have at least equalized.
26...g6 27.♖f3 f5 28.♖fd3 ♘c5
Not essential, but possible.
29.♘xc5 ♖xc5 30.♖d5



30...♖xd5
An important moment! Here an immediate draw would have been forced by the attractive 30...♖e1+! 31.♖xe1 ♖xd5 32.♖e7 ♖d1+ 33.♔f2 ♖d2+ 34.♖e2 ♖d5 35.♖e7 ♖d2+ 36.♖e2 ♖d5.
31.♖xd5
Now White has some grounds for tormenting his opponent. At any event, during the entire game I had not yet stood so well!
31...♔f7 32.♖d6 With the idea of playing the rook to b6.



32...♔g7
This king manoeuvre looks rather strange, but the problem is that after the natural 32...♖e6? there follows 33.♖d7+ ♖e7 34.♖xe7+! ♔xe7 35.♔f2 ♔d6 36.♔e3 ♔e5 37.g3. It would seem that the black king is in the centre, the pawns are equal and a draw is not far off, but surprisingly, this endgame is lost for Black! White diverts the king with his queenside pawns, breaks through to the h7-pawn and wins.
For example: 37...g5 38.h4 h6 39.c4 ♔d6 40.b4 ♔e5 41.h5 ♔e6 42.♔d4 ♔d6 43.b5 ♔e6 44.bxa6 bxa6 45.c5, and White wins.
33.♔f2 ♔h6 34.♔f3 ♔h5
Of course, objectively the endgame is drawn, but in view of his more active pieces White has chances of success.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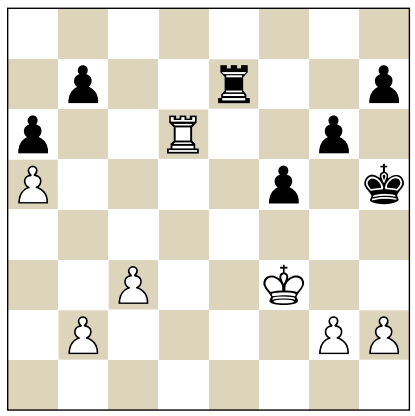
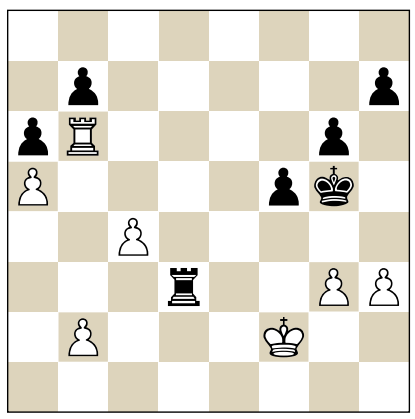
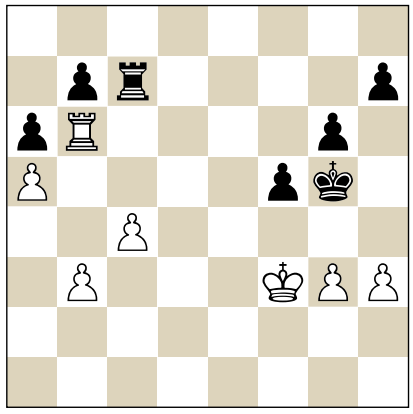


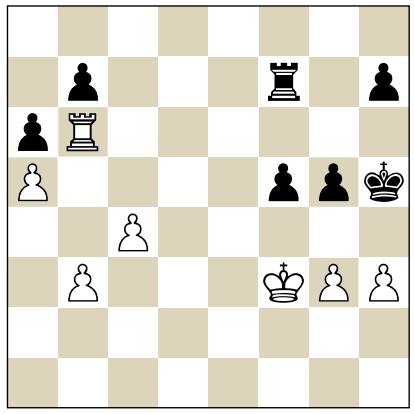
35.♖b6 ♔g5 36.g3 ♖c7 37.h3
If 37.c4 the simplest is 37...♖xc4! 38. h4+ ♔h5 39.♖xb7 h6 40.♖b6 ♖c2, and Black easily holds on.
37...♖d7 38.c4 ♖d3+ 39.♔f2



39...♖d7 In view of the fact that my opponent had just a minute to reach the time control, I was hoping that he would not decide on 39...f4 40.gxf4+ ♔xf4 41.♖xb7 ♖xh3, which would have given a straightforward draw.
40.♔e3 ♖e7+ 41.♔f3 ♖c7 42.b3



White has achieved the maximum that was practically possible, but it is well known that rook endings are always drawn, and the safety margin of Black's position is still great.
42...♔h5 43.♔f4
43.b4 ♖xc4 44.♖xb7 ♔g5 45.h4+ ♔f6 46.♔g2 f4 would have led to a draw.
43...♖f7 44.♔f3
It was possible to begin with 44.b4, which would have transposed into the game. Nothing is given by 44.♔e5 g5 45.♔e6 ♔g6 followed by 46...f4.
44...g5 44...♔g5 45.c5 would have signified a delay by Black, after which big problems would have been possible. This was why I began with 44.♔f3.



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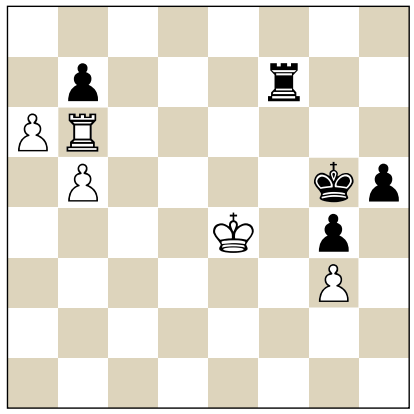
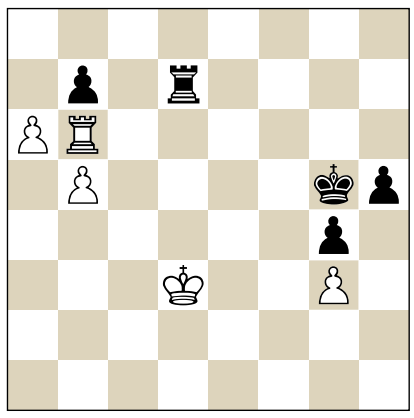
45.b4 g4+ 46.hxg4+ fxg4+ 47.♔e4 ♔g5 48.b5
48.c5 was possibly more interesting, but apparently here too Black holds on, for example: 48...♖e7+ 49.♔d4 ♖d7+ 50.♔e5 h5 51.b5 axb5 52.♖xb5 ♖c7 53.♔d6 ♖c6+ 54.♔d5 ♖c7 55.a6 bxa6 56.♖b8 h4 57.♖g8+ ♔f5 58.gxh4 ♖d7+ 59.♔c6 ♖h7.
48...axb5 49.cxb5 h5 50.a6

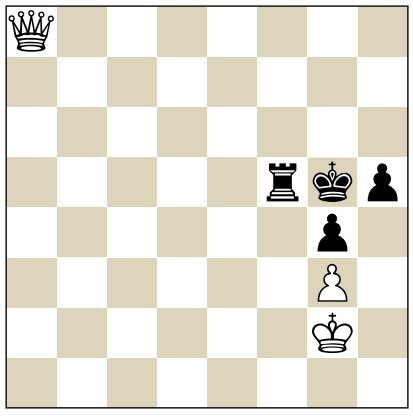


50...♖e7+
As the further course of the game shows, it was more sensible first to capture 50...bxa6.
51.♔d3 ♖d7+



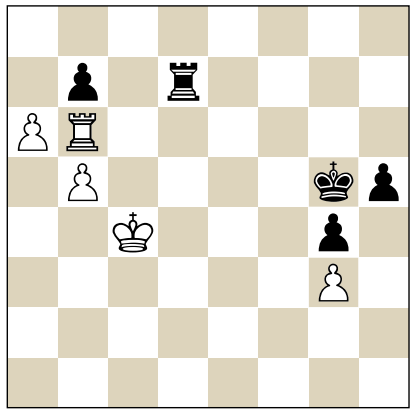
52.♔c4
There is an important variation if White goes to the other side: 52.♔e3

♖e7+ 53.♔f2 ♖f7+ 54.♔g2 bxa6 55.bxa6 ♖f5!! (55...♖a7 56.♖b5+ ♔g6 57.♖a5 would appear to be hopeless for Black) 56.a7 ♖a5 57.♖b5+ ♖xb5 58.a8♕ ♖f5.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A picturesque position! Despite his extra queen, White's king is cut off, which prevents him from strengthening his position. A fortress! It is amusing that this entire variation was pointed out by Alexander after the game, as, for example, was the far from obvious win in the pawn ending on the 32nd move. I have to admit that he saw more than me in this game, but for me everything 'came together'.



52...♖c7+?

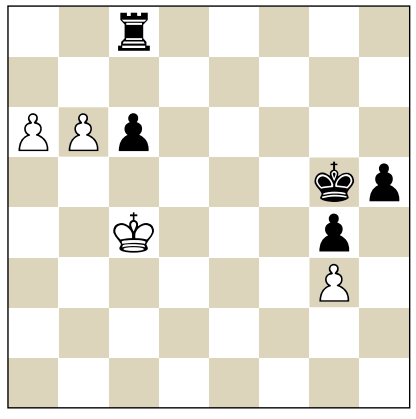
Luck, of course, but after a not so simple endgame with numerous traps for an instant Black's concentration wavers and this costs him the game.

52...bxa6 53.bxa6 would have given a straightforward draw: 53...♖c7+ 54.♔b4 (54.♔d3 may revert to the drawing variation given above with a queen) 54...h4 55.♖b5+ ♔h6 56.gxh4 ♖a7 57.♔a5 g3 58.♖g5 ♖g7.

53.♖c6

Here things are immediately hopeless for Black. The a- and b-pawns sweep away everything in their path.

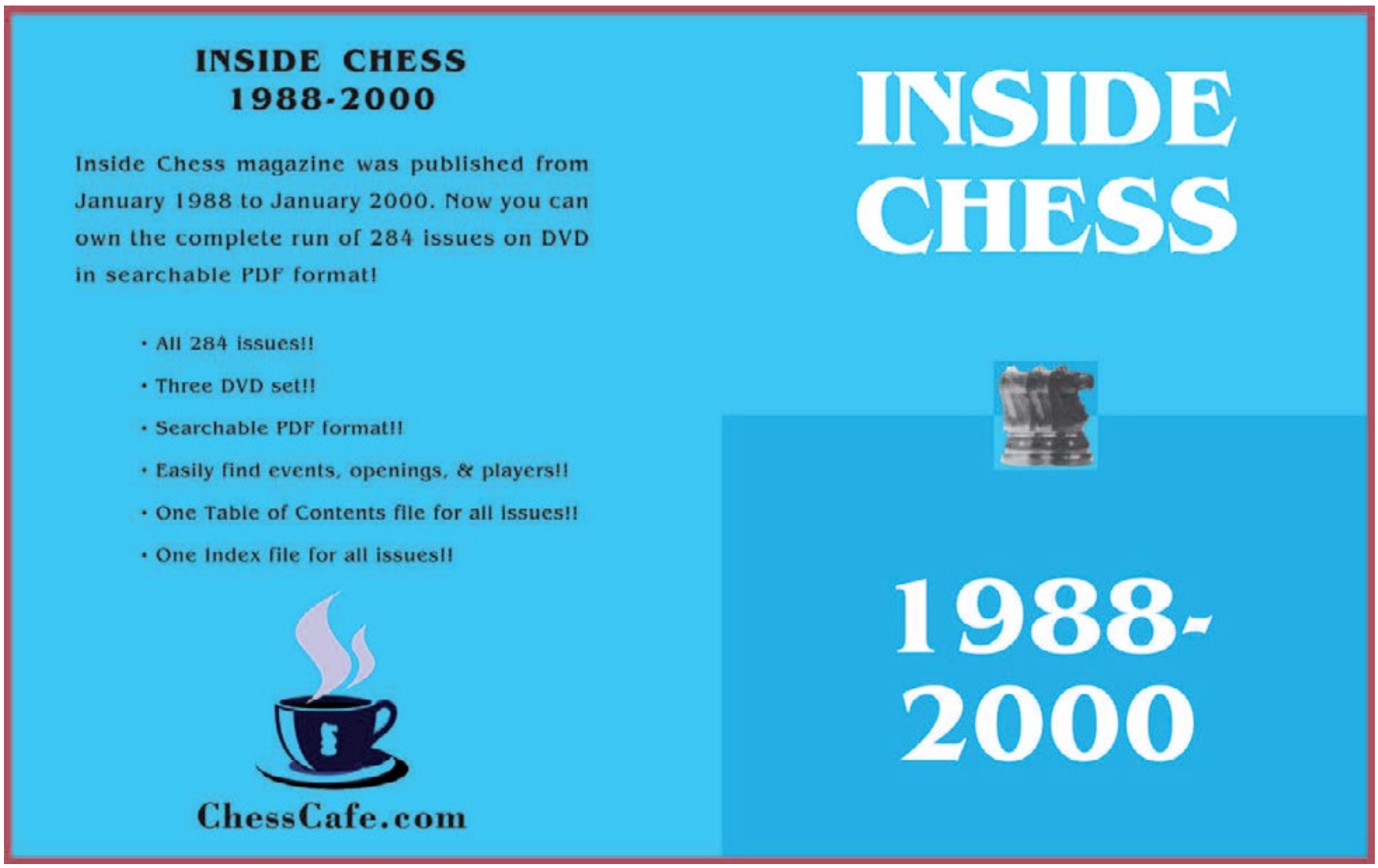
53...bxc6 54.b6 ♖c8



55.b7 ♖b8 56.♔c5 h4 57.a7 ♖xb7 58.a8♕ ♖h7 59.♕g8+ ♔h6 60.gxh4 ♖g7 61.♕h8+ ♔g6 62.h5+ ♔f7 63.h6 ♖g5+ 64.♔d6 g3 65.♕h7+ ♔f6 66.♕e7+ ♔f5 67.♕xg5+ ♔xg5 68.h7

Black resigned.

■ ■ ■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Deep into the second half of the tournament, Peter Leko got to a plus score. The tournament had been very tough for him and he was struggling, often in time-trouble. But he stood firm, survived a couple of really tough moments, and then won what looked to me like a positional masterpiece against Kamsky. In Tashkent, Peter was accompanied by his wife Sofi. They would often join my wife and me at the dinner table, and I would wonder about Peter's infinite chess knowledge and Sofi's indefatigable optimism. I've played quite a number of games against Peter in my life, the first one a full 18 years ago, and our game in Tashkent was the first one ever to give me winning chances. But as said, Peter stood firm ☺.

'Wang Hao's win against Caruana will be remembered a long time.'

The final rounds were incredibly tense. Wang Hao emerged from the group of players with 50 per cent and achieved what I would personally consider quite impossible – he scored 2½ out of his last 3 games against Caruana, Gelfand, and Mamedyarov. His win against Caruana will be remembered for a long time, also because of an interview Wang Hao gave just before the game. When asked what he thought of his chances in the game he was about to play, he politely referred to his immaculate score against Caruana. When a journalist tried to elaborate, however, mentioning Fabiano's recent results and rating, Wang Hao said something like 'You know, I'm not too bad myself ☺' And what do you know – his score remained perfect!

NOTES BY
Wang Hao

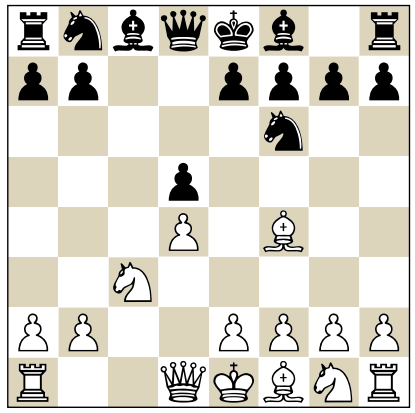
SL 11.16 – D10
Wang Hao
Fabiano Caruana
Tashkent 2012 (9)

My idea for this game was to play for a position which is nothing special but offers some practical chances for White in the long run.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.cxd5

I guess this move surprised my opponent. Previously I had never played the Exchange Slav with white in a formal game, but I had prepared a large part of this variation for my game with black against Morozevich only one round earlier, so why not to try it myself as White?

4...cxd5 5.♗f4



5...♘c6

Mamedyarov played 5...♕b6 against Morozevich in Round 4, but I was certainly not afraid of this move.

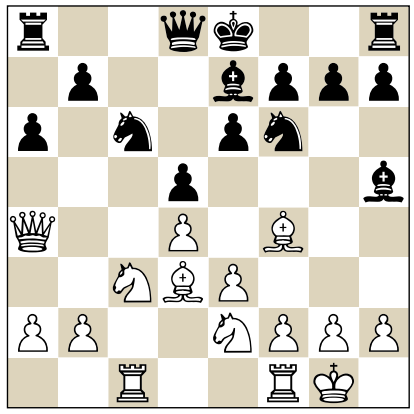
6.e3 a6 7.♗d3 ♗g4 8.♘ge2 e6 9.0-0 ♗e7 10.♖c1 ♗h5

I mainly prepared 10...0-0, which is the main line. As I had not looked at the text-move very well, I decided to come up with an original idea.

11.♕b3

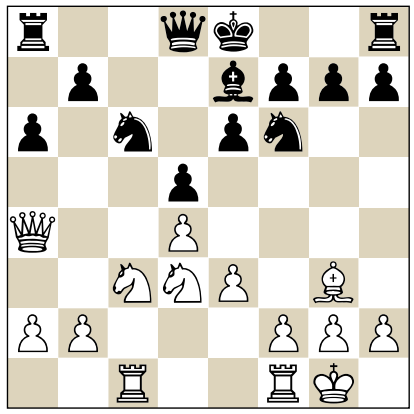
11.♘a4 was probably a better idea. After 11...♗g6 (11...♘d7 12.♕b3 ♘a5 13.♕c3 led to a slightly better position for White in Landa-Svetushkin last year) 12.a3 0-0 13.b4, White is slightly better.

11...♘a5 12.♕a4+ ♘c6



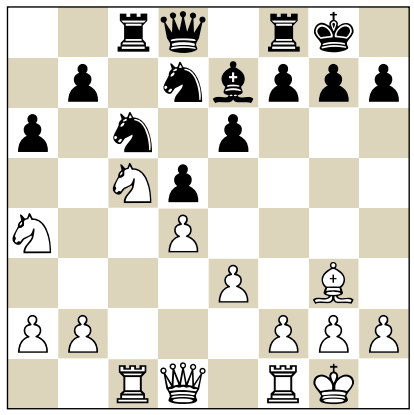
13.♗g3 This was the idea behind my 11th move: to transfer my e2-knight to the better square d3. Actually, it's less promising than it looks.

13...♗g6 14.♘f4 ♗xd3 15.♘xd3



15...♘d7 15...0-0 was better. I believe the position would be equal after 16.♕d1 ♖c8, as Black can simply play ...♘e4 after 17.♘a4.

16.♕d1 0-0 17.♘a4 ♖c8 18.♘dc5 I had to play this move immediately, otherwise Black would save himself with ...♘a5.



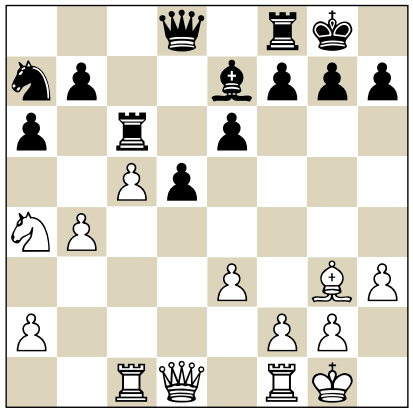
18...♘xc5?! 18...♗xc5 was what I had expected. After 19.dxc5 ♕a5! 20.a3 ♕b5 21.b4 the black queen at b5 looks a bit awkward, but Black has

21...a5! 22.♘c3 ♕c4, and his position is fine.

19.dxc5 ♘a7 20.b4 ♖c6

If Black tries to swap the bishops immediately with 20...♗h4, White has a good answer in 21.♘b6 ♖c6 22.♗e5!.

21.h3 To keep the bishops on the board, as White has more space.



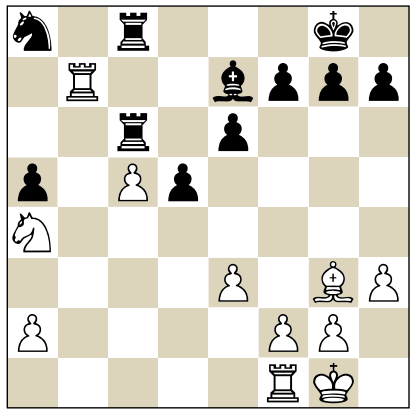
21...a5?

Here my opponent blundered badly. After the natural 21...f5 White is only slightly better, with some chances on the queenside.

22.b5!

Now Black is in trouble.

22...♘xb5 23.♕b3 ♘c7 24.♕xb7 ♕a8 25.♖b1 ♖c8 26.♕xa8 ♘xa8 27.♖b7

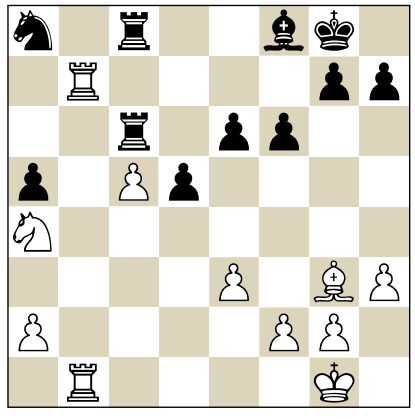


After a few forced moves Black will be facing a really unpleasant endgame, which he will probably lose due to the knight on a8.

27...♗f8

I thought that 27...♗d8 was more logical, trying to free the knight from the corner, although it was probably too late to save it. White is on top after 28.♖fb1 ♗c7 29.♖a7! ♗xg3 30.fxg3 ♘c7 31.♖bb7 ♘e8 32.♘b6 ♖d8 33.♖xa5.

28.♖fb1 f6



29.♖a7?!

As my friend and second in this tournament Lou Yiping mentioned, 29.♖b8 was simpler: after 29...e5 30.♖xc8 ♖xc8 31.♖b7 g5 (31...♖c6 32.f4) 32.♖a7 White is winning, as Black has run out of useful moves.

29...e5 30.f4 d4 31.fxe5 dxe3 32.exf6

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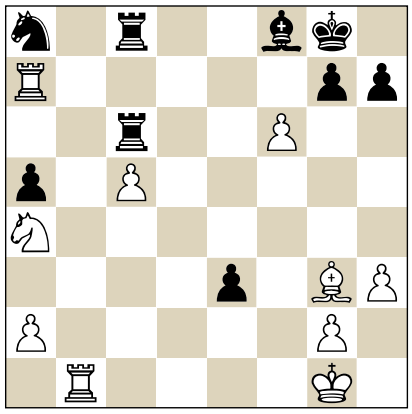
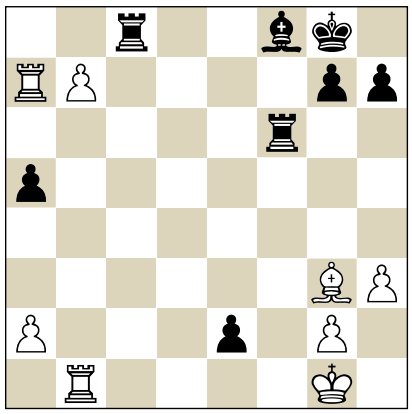


32...gxf6?!

32...♖xf6 was the best way for Black to resist: after 33.♖xa5 (I was counting on 33.♘b6 ♘xb6 34.cxb6 e2 35.b7



ANALYIS DIAGRAM

and thought that this should be winning for White, but I had missed 35... ♖f1+!, when I don't think that White will be able to win after 36.♖xf1 ♗c5+ 37.♖f2! e1♕+ 38.♔h2 ♖b8! 39.♖a8 ♗xf2 40.♖xb8+ ♔f7 41.♖f8+ ♔xf8 42.b8♕+ ♔e7) 33...e2 34.♖e1 ♖e6 35.♖a7, White is clearly better, but it's still not easy to get the full point.

33.♔f1! The king joins the battle.

33...♖e8 33...♗xc5 also leads to a win for White: 34.♘xc5 ♖xc5 35.♖bb7 ♖f5+ 36.♔e2 ♖g5 37.♗b8.

After two GPs China's number one Wang Hao occupies second place in the overall standings.

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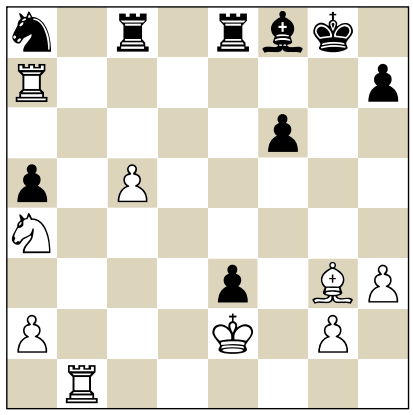
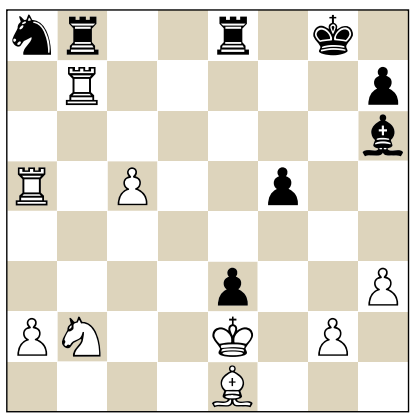
34.♔e2 ♖cc8

34...♗xc5 won't work: 35.♘xc5 ♖xc5 36.♖bb7 ♖g5 37.♗f4 ♖xg2+ 38.♔f3 ♖g6 39.♗xe3, and White is winning.



35.♖bb7 f5 36.♖xa5 ♖cd8 37.♗e1 ♗h6 38.♘b2 ♖b8



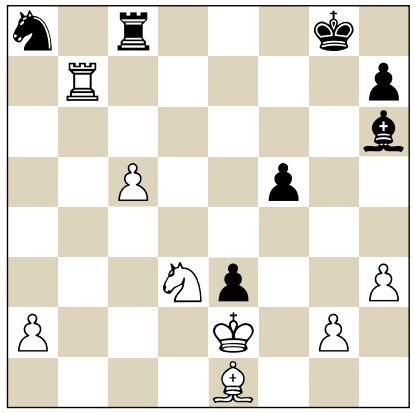
39.♖aa7?

This offers Black some practical chances. 39.♖ab5 leads to an easy win.

39...♖xb7?

The final mistake before the first time-control. 39...♘c7 was Black's last chance. Luckily enough, the position is still winning for White after 40. ♖xb8 ♖xb8 41.♘c4 ♘e6 42.♖a6 ♖e8 43.♘d6 ♘xc5 44.♖a5 ♖d8 45.♘xf5.

40.♖xb7 ♖c8 41.♘d3



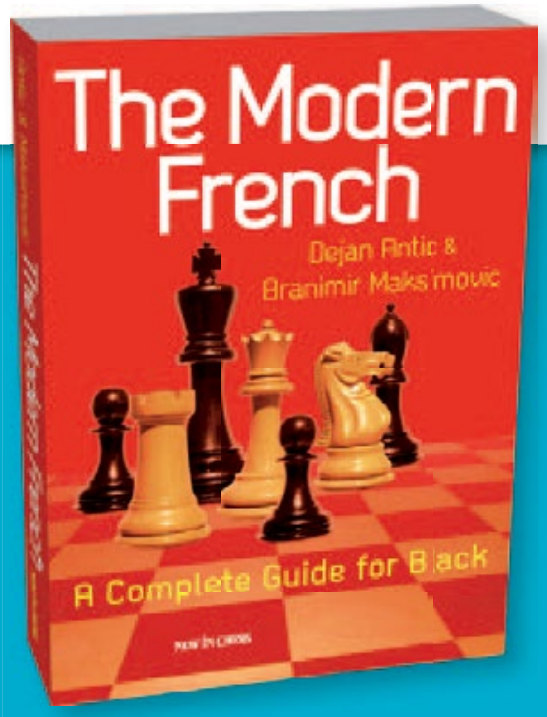
Now White is completely winning.

41...♘c7 42.♖b6 ♗g5 43.♖c6

The knight is trapped. Black resigned.

■ ■ ■

The last two rounds could not possibly have been more exciting. The difference between the leaders and the rest being so minimal, every game caused major changes. In the penultimate round, Karjakin was beaten by Mamedyarov, Leko lost control in a tricky opening position against Morozevich, Ponomariov developed an attack from pretty much nothing against Dominguez and didn't miss.



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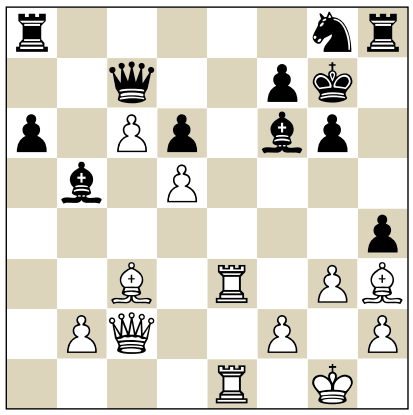
The last round provided some more bloodshed, with Wang Hao defeating Mamedyarov, who thus lost his first game in the tournament, and Karjakin beating Ponomariov in the last game to finish, proving that he's got what it takes to pull oneself together after a loss. For a while it looked as if Svidler could spoil Moro's tournament.



Svidler-Morozevich
position after 27...h4

In this position Peter played 28.g4, which looked logical enough, and the game ended in a draw after some serious complications. However, instead of 28.g4, White had an interesting shot at his disposal: **28.♖e7! ♕b6** Play remains very complicated and even afterwards I did not find a clear-cut solution. 28...♘xe7? ends in checkmate after 29.♗xf6+ ♔xf6 30.♕c3+ ♔g5 31.♕e3+ ♔f6 32.♕d4+. **29.♖xf7+** The alternative 29.♗xf6+ ♘xf6 30.♗e6 ♖hf8 31.c7 ♕c5 32.♕xc5 dxc5 33.d6 looks strong, but after 33...♘g8! 34.♗d5 ♘xe7 35.♖xe7 ♖ae8 36.d7 ♖xe7 37.d8♕ ♖ee8 White is not really trying to win. Objectively speaking, 29.♖b7!? ♕c5 30.♗e6 ♖f8 31.c7 ♗xc3 32.bxc3 may be interesting, but this looks insane to a human being, for various reasons. **29...♔xf7 30.♗e6+ ♔g7 31.♗xg8!** The only way to proceed, which makes the whole line so tough to find over the board. **31...♖hxg8 32.♖e7+ ♔f8 33.♗xf6 ♕c5 34.♕d2!** 34.♕xc5 dxc5 35.c7 looks nice, but is probably not winning. **34...g5** And here, according to my machine, White should play **35.b3!!** , and he is clearly better ☺. Needless to say, lines like this have more academic value than anything else, but they remain impressive.

When the dust had settled, there were three winners, just like in the London GP. In Tashkent, however, plus 2 was enough for shared first place, and two of the winners got to plus 2 by winning their last game. The three winners, Karjakin, Morozevich and Wang Hao, followed different courses to their final result, but all three had the same qualities in common: the ability to recover from losses, to play decisive games, and above all, in a field like this, to win many games. Three players followed half a point adrift. Mamedyarov had good reason to be upset – after all, he was one of the winners of London, and a win in Tashkent would have made him a serious favourite for overall victory in the cycle. Caruana, somewhat uncharacteristically, lost two games, and even needed to show a lot of defensive skills in his last-round game against Leko to stay at plus 1.

I'll conclude with a few words about myself, if I may. I was very solid and very determined. I did all I could to avoid losing games at home, and I managed. Clearly, I did not make the most of my chances – the positions I had against Dominguez and Leko were indeed very, very promising – but you see, solidity always comes at a certain price. I did, however, win an interesting game with black against Wang Hao. At the end of the day I celebrated my plus one with no losses as a huge success – after all, the Tashkent GP was the best classical super-tournament of my career so far.

For me, the whole story has a fairy-tale-like feel to it. The last round being on 4 December, and my birthday on the 5th, one of my best tournaments smoothly turned into a party, where I was amongst friends and family. I felt intensely happy.

NOTES BY
Rustam Kasimdzhanov

SO 4.3 – C45
Wang Hao
Rustam Kasimdzhanov
Tashkent 2012 (5)

During the London Grand Prix I was spending a lot of time reading the New In Chess issue dedicated to Biel 2012, which contained an interview with the winner Wang Hao. I was also quite fascinated by Nakamura's notes to his black game against Wang Hao, which started with the words '1.e4! what a great first move'. In London, preparing for my black game against Hao, I only looked at 1.e4 and prepared the Scotch in some insane detail (and when I say insane I mean insane ☺). When I came to the board and saw 1.c4, I thought 'So much for the Scotch'. In Tashkent I did not repeat my mistake and prepared only for closed openings, such as the Catalan and stuff.

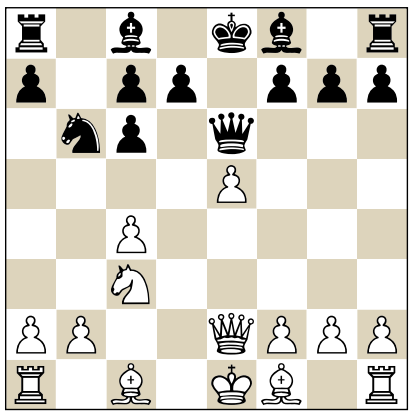
1.e4

Once again, what a great first move!

1...e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4

The Scotch after all. Good prep is never wasted.

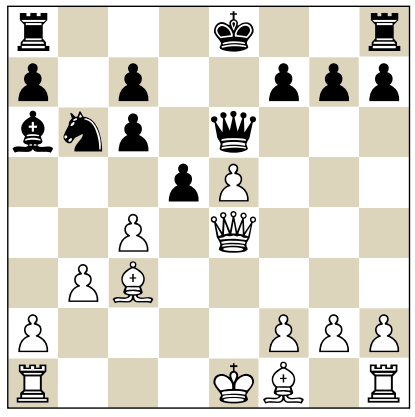
3...exd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘xc6 bxc6 6.e5 ♕e7 7.♕e2 ♘d5 8.c4 ♘b6 9.♘c3 ♕e6



My old line, which I played against Movsesian back in 2003 (ages and ages ago). Wang Hao looked surprised, thought for a couple of minutes, and then continued blitzing.

10.♕e4 ♗b4 11.♗d2 ♗a6 12.b3 ♗xc3 13.♗xc3 d5

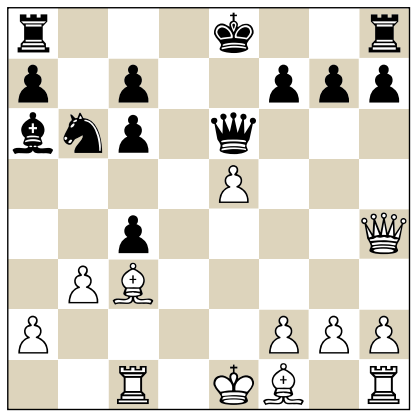
An extremely forcing line of the Scotch, which has been played extensively at the highest level, beginning with Kasparov-Timman back in 2000 or so.



14.♕f3

Also blitzed out, but I am an old fox by now, and don't really fall for these tricks anymore. I knew my prep basically worked. 14.♕f3 is a quiet sideline.

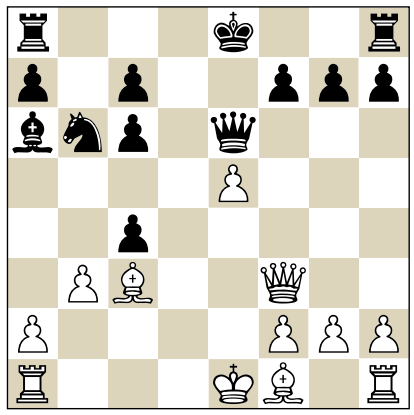
The main move is 14.♕h4! dxc4 15.♖c1! (a brilliant discovery by Macieja in 2005, which brought him a full point against Kortchnoi. The following year Radjabov used it to beat Karjakin. 15.♗e2 ♘d5 16.♗xc4 g5 17.♕d4 ♗xc4 18.♕xc4 0-0-0! is the very old main line; 18...♘f4 19.♕xe6+ ♘xe6 20.0-0-0 was better for White in the stem game that I mentioned, Kasparov-Timman.)



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

15...♕g6!, and with this two top games were played in 2008: Carlsen-Karjakin and Wang Hao-Karjakin. I had taken a pretty decent look at it in London and still remembered some details ☺.

14...dxc4



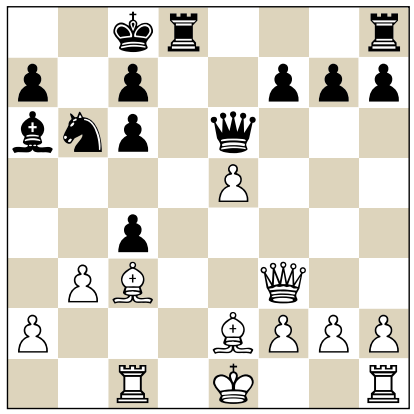
15.♖c1?!

Still very fast, which made me wonder. The move I remembered was 15.♗e2 0-0 16.0-0, as in two of Spassky's games (yes, I know my classics ☺). I was trying hard to understand what ♖c1 was for, since if I castled kingside I still saw nothing better for White than ♗e2. Only much later did I figure that Wang Hao probably mixed something up, and maybe thought we were just following the main theory, as in the line with 14.♕h4 dxc4 15.♖c1.

15...0-0-0!

A very good move, but not easy to make, since castling kingside was completely fine for Black as well. Castling queenside, played with the idea that followed, was the turning point for me: here I knew I wanted to win.

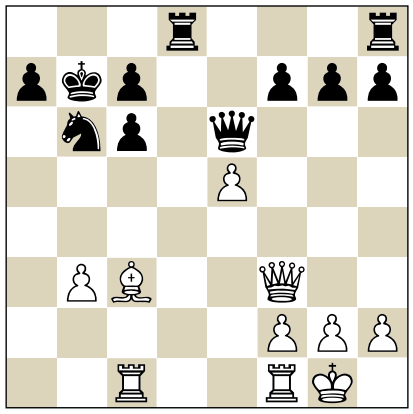
16.♗e2



16...♔b7!

An idea I knew from the other line: 14.♕h4 dxc4 15.♖c1 ♕g6 16.g3 f6 17.♗e2 0-0-0 etc.

17.0-0 cxb3 18.♗xa6+ ♔xa6 19. axb3 ♔b7



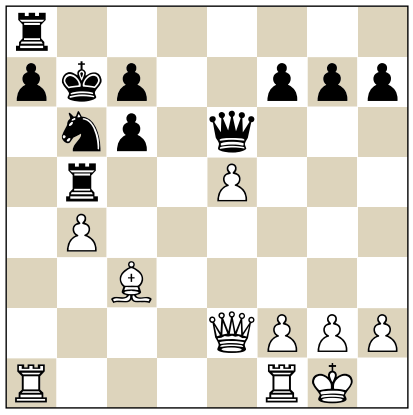
The dust has settled, and I thought Black was clearly better, but was facing serious technical problems. After the game my second Anton Filippov told me the computer liked White ☺. Usually this takes precedence, but in this case I stuck to my guns. Black is a pawn up and has a better minor piece left. The fact that Black is winning on the queenside makes it tough, however: I'll be forced to advance pawns in front of my king.

20.♖a1 Remember move 15?

20...♖d5

I saw nothing wrong with 20...♕xb3, but somehow felt that this move would make it tougher to convert.

21.♕e2 ♖b5 22.b4 ♖a8!



I felt so solid around here; White has no compensation.

23.♖fc1 a6 24.h3 ♘d5

Black's advantage has crystalized.

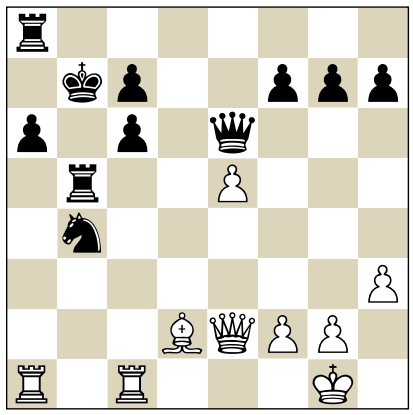
25.♗d2 After 25.♕e4 h5 Black is doing great as well.

25...♘xb4

Once again, I was not sure. Anton Fillipov told me after the game that he did not like this move, but I felt Black had to take the pawn at some point to make progress!

.:TASHKENT2012.FIDE.COM

Accompanied by his wife Firuza, local hero Rustam Kasimdzhanov arrives in a good mood at the Tashkent Art Gallery for his game against Wang Hao.



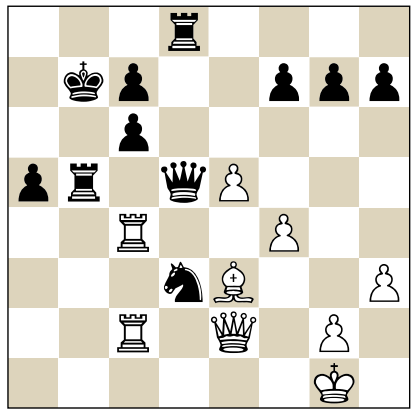
26.♖c4

My machine suggests 26.♗xb4, and it was mentioned to me by GM Miroshnichenko (he did the live English commentary in Tashkent. GM Iuldashev was responsible for Russian. I was happy to see both of them) after the game. I feel the position after 26...♖xb4 27.♖c5 ♖b5 28.♖ac1 ♖xc5 29.♖xc5 a5 is still very difficult for White.

26...a5 27.f4

OK, now Black must be winning. I was, however, dreadfully nervous, and there were still some adventures ahead.

27...♕d5 28.♖ac1 ♖d8 29.♗e3 ♘d3 30.♖1c2



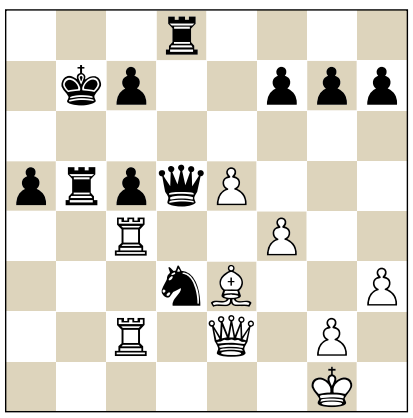
Tashkent 2012 — **cat. XX**

					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		TPR
1	Sergey Karjakin	IGM	RUS	2775	*	½	1	½	0	½	1	½	½	½	1	½	6½	2810
2	Wang Hao	IGM	CHN	2737	½	*	½	1	1	0	½	½	½	½	½	1	6½	2813
3	Alexander Morozevich	IGM	RUS	2748	0	½	*	1	½	½	0	½	1	½	1	1	6½	2812
6	Fabiano Caruana	IGM	ITA	2786	½	0	0	*	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	1	6	2780
5	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	IGM	AZE	2764	1	0	½	½	*	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	6	2782
4	Rustam Kasimdzhanov	IGM	UZB	2696	½	1	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	½	6	2788
8	Ruslan Ponomariov	IGM	UKR	2741	0	½	1	½	½	½	*	0	½	½	1	½	5½	2748
7	Peter Svidler	IGM	RUS	2747	½	½	½	½	0	½	1	*	½	½	½	½	5½	2747
9	Peter Leko	IGM	HUN	2732	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	1	5½	2748
10	Boris Gelfand	IGM	ISR	2751	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	0	4½	2682
11	Leinier Dominguez	IGM	CUB	2726	0	½	0	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	*	1	4	2647
12	Gata Kamsky	IGM	USA	2762	½	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	0	1	0	*	3½	2613

30...c5?!

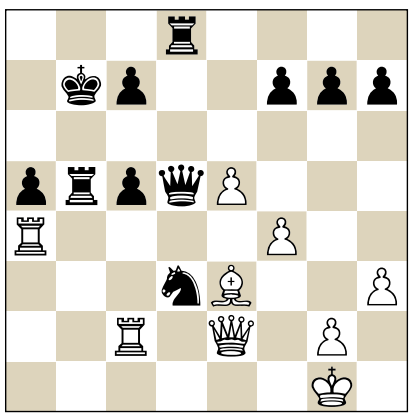
A move that felt right, but is, in fact, pretty inaccurate. The correct idea did not even cross my mind:

30...g5! is a natural move, but I thought White had a threat: 31.♖d4 (31.♖xc6 ♖d7!, and White falls apart) 31...♘xf4! and funnily enough, the white queen has no good squares: 32.♕d1 (32.♕f2 ♘xh3+!; 32.♕d2 ♖b1+ 33.♔h2 ♕xe5 34.♖xd8 ♘h5+, winning) 32...♕xe5! 33.♖xd8 ♕xe3+, and this is completely winning.



31.♖a4?!

While Wang Hao was pondering his move, I grew quite uncertain about 31.♖xc5!, which, in fact, was White's best chance: 31...♖xc5! (indeed the better move – I looked at the immediate 31...♖b1+ 32.♔h2 ♘xc5 33.♖xc5 ♕d3 34.♕f3+ ♔b8 35.♖xa5 ♖b7 36.f5 and thought White would be just fine, despite his material deficit, so I was hoping 31...♖xc5 would work) 32.♗xc5 ♘xf4!? (this was my idea, but 32...a4 is also still nice for Black) 33.♖b2+ ♔c8 34.♕a6+ ♔d7 (this looks a bit scary, but Black keeps control) 35.♕b5+ ♔e6!.



31...♔b6

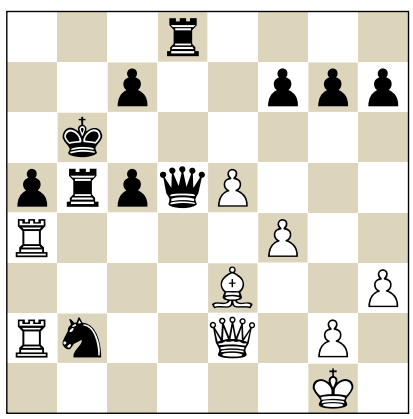
Immediately after making this move, I wanted to take it back ☺. I was getting low on time and decided to protect my belongings on the queenside. But here 31...g5! was just curtains: 32.fxg5 ♖b1+ 33.♔h2 ♕xe5+.

32.♖ca2

This really helps me, but in fact White is already lost. Black wins by going ...g5 ☺.

32...♘b2!

This one I saw more or less instantly. Now White loses a rook or the queens go off.



33.♕xb2!

Imaginative, but not enough.

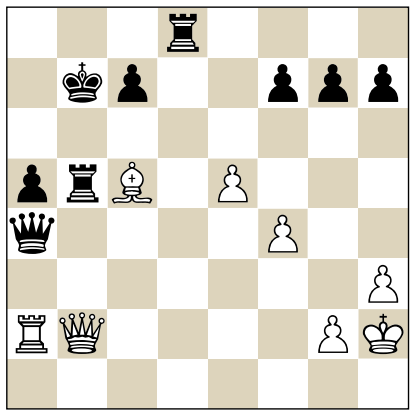
33.♖xb2 hits on 33...♕d1+, and 33.♖4a3 on the same 33...♕d1+.

33...♕d1+ 34.♔h2 ♕xa4!

So much easier than taking the queen. The game should normally be over, but my nerves were still playing tricks on me.

35.♗xc5+ ♔b7?!

Instantly played, this move could have prolonged the game. The cleaner 35...♔a6 basically forces resignation.



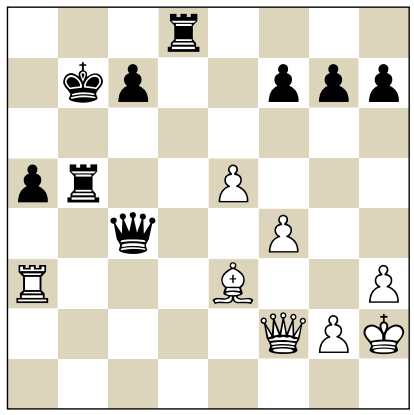
36.♕f2?!

This looks natural, but now there is nothing left to play for. We had both missed 36.♕e2!, and although after 36...♕b3 (36...♕xf4+? 37.g3) 37.♖a3 ♕b2 38.♕f3+ c6 39.♗d6 ♕d4 Black is still winning, I would have to show some technique.

36...♕b3

Now my only task is to reach move 40 unscathed.

37.♖a3 ♕c4 38.♗e3



38...g6

See the previous comment ☺.

39.♕e1 ♖d3 40.♕e2 ♖bd5

And Wang Hao resigned. I walked downstairs for the press conference and the crowd went absolutely bananas ☺. ■

Grand Prix standings

		1	2	
1	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	140	80	**220**
2	Wang Hao	70	140	**210**
3	Boris Gelfand	140	30	**170**
6	Veselin Topalov	140		**140**
5	Alexander Morozevich		140	**140**
4	Sergey Karjakin		140	**140**
8	Peter Leko	80	50	**130**
7	Rustam Kasimdzhanov	35	80	**115**
9	Alexander Grischuk	90		**90**
10	Fabiano Caruana		80	**80**
11	Michael Adams	55		**55**
12	Leinier Dominguez	35	20	**55**
13	Vasily Ivanchuk	55		**55**
14	Ruslan Ponomariov		50	**50**
15	Peter Svidler		50	**50**
16	Anish Giri	15		**15**
17	Hikaru Nakamura	15		**15**
18	Gata Kamsky		10	**10**
19	Vugar Gashimov			**-**
20	Teimour Radjabov			**-**

1 = London; 2 = Tashkent; four to go: Lisbon, Madrid, Berlin, Paris; best three results count.

Short Stories

Seven Pillars of Wisdom

The British Empire has been in decline for so long that it is hard to believe that the Trucial States, on the Persian Gulf, were a protectorate until as recently as 1971. Quite why the Edward Heath government of the time chose to cede the vast oil wealth of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Fujairah, Ras-al-Khaimah and Umm-al-Quwain, while retaining sovereignty over a useless bunch of wave-lashed, South Atlantic rocks, known as the Falkland Islands, I really do not know. Throwing off the colonial shackles was nevertheless a blessing for the newly independent country. The United Arab Emirates, as it became, has developed at breath-taking pace over the subsequent four decades. It was with such thoughts, and of Arabian chess in general, that I set off, as top board for London, for the 3rd World Cities Team Championship to the desert oasis of Al Ain.

The golden age of Islamic chess, however, began over a millennium earlier, in the Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad, under Harun-ar-Rashid (786-809) – the fourth ruler of that dynasty. For the next 150 years or so the game flourished under royal patronage. Indeed, as several people are known to have owed their position at court in part because of their chess accomplishments, it is arguable that professionalism began at that time. The established champion under Caliph Al-Mutawakkil (847-861) – Al-Adli – played before his ruler in a match against Ar-Razi, which his younger challenger won. Al-Adli's reputation suffered further posthumous denigration when the most celebrated chess player, composer and author of the era, As-Suli, poured scorn upon the ideas of his predecessor…

Chess in Mesopotamia, alas, languished over the following centuries. The sacking of Baghdad by the Mongol hordes in 1258 undoubtedly did not help. Our Great Leader Kirsan Ilyumzhinov's friendship with the genocidal dictator, Saddam Hussein, also failed to bring about a chess renaissance. The Iraqi Chess Federation of today is riven by internal strife. In December it imposed draconian punishments on the organisers and participants of the Kurdistan International Chess Festival. One did not require a Ph.D. in semiotics to deduce that the provocative tournament banner implied independence for that large and perpetually downtrodden ethnic group, but one nevertheless feels that the issue could have been handled with greater sensitivity all round.

Ironically, the only grandmaster to have been born in Baghdad – William Watson, who is nowadays a distinguished corporate tax lawyer and partner at Slaughter and May in London – was due to have been the English team captain in Al Ain, until an unfortunate collision with a dog, while riding his bicycle through Hyde Park, left him with fractures, multiple broken bones and requiring a painful operation on his elbow. We suffered a further blow when Stephen Gordon went down with gastritis and I had to find a last-minute replacement. As it happened, our best junior, Yang-Fan Zhou, was online, on Facebook, and so I immediately enquired him whether he was available. After quickly clearing the matter with his parents, he found himself unexpectedly on his way to Heathrow Airport.

The World Cities Team Championship is conceptually a very odd event. Apart from membership of the relevant federation, somewhat illogically, no tie whatsoever is required with the metropolis, or indeed hamlet, one represents. One gets the feeling that it is an entirely artificial construct, designed with the sole intention of having a grand-sounding title that FIDE so loves. That being said, I can nevertheless easily imagine the tournament growing steadily in prestige over the coming years. Perhaps the main attraction is the prize money, which, although not quite enough of itself to entice the very strongest players, is definitely worthwhile winning – particularly if supplemented by domestic sponsorship. My federation took the invitation as a useful opportunity to blood a couple of fringe players on the national team. Furthermore, the Emiratis are excellent hosts, and there are certainly far worse ways of spending Christmas than in a luxury hotel in a warm climate.

The Asian Chess Federation (ACF), under Sheikh Sultan bin Khalifa al Nahyan, whose family dominates the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, of which Al Ain

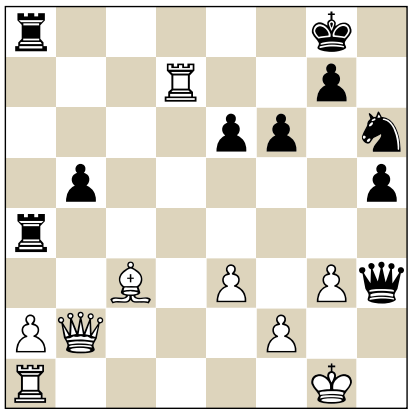
is the second largest city, organised this event. The ACF is unquestionably a large and very important regional power, but ironically its influence does not yet extend beyond the gardens of the Danat Hotel – where many of us stayed – across the border into Oman. The authorities in Muscat have thus far been immune to the charms of FIDE's loving embrace. According to Hisham al-Taher, the genial General Secretary of the ACF, this has less to do with antipathy to the noble game than official indecision as whether to categorise it as sport or culture – a problem, which as a Brit, I can well recognise. A number of Omani citizens participated in the Al Ain Classic open tournament that ran alongside the main event, so one hopes the legal limbo will prove a purely temporary phenomenon.

Neighbouring Saudi Arabia is likewise unenfranchised, although whether this is because the ferociously austere Wahhabists deem chess to be superfluous and thus unworthy, or the game's regicidal symbolism is considered to be dangerously revolutionary, I know not. The fact is the country remains by far the most significant country to lie outside the ambit of the world governing body.

Kuwait has only recently returned to the FIDE fold after the calamitous disruptions of the Gulf War. Unusually, for a patriarchal society, the Deputy President of the federation is a woman. Activity is slowly picking up: an international tournament is planned for February. Notwithstanding that, one must conclude that the game, in the vast and disparate region of Arabia, is currently not in the greatest of health. For sure there are a couple of bright beacons of activity and expertise – such as the UAE and Qatar – but there are also great swathes where structures are poor to non-existent and skills are low. For every tentative step forward, such as Kuwait, there is a step backwards, like Syria, which is caught in the firm grip of a fierce, destructive civil war. It is a damning thought that, to this day, the only GM to have emerged from Damascus is a man whose achievements owe nothing to his place of birth – Yasser Seirawan.

But back to the Al Ain: I am aware that the editor has asked Anish Giri to provide a proper tournament report, so I shall instead focus on a couple of brief moments of personal interest.

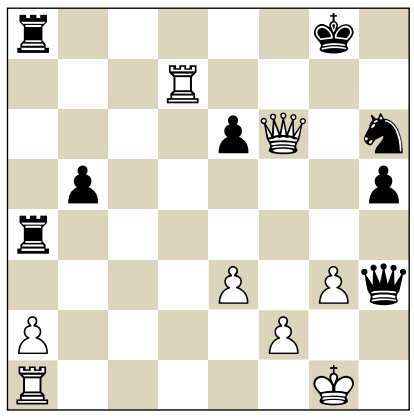
'One must conclude that the game, in the vast and disparate region of Arabia, is currently not in the greatest of health.'



Murshed-Short
Al Ain World Cities 2012 (2)

The many-times Bangladeshi Champion had been struggling during the middlegame, but now he saw a chance to turn the tables and quickly played **29.♗xf6!?** However, after **29...gxf6!** he suddenly stopped dead in his tracks.

29...♘g4? 30.♖xg7+ ♔f8 31.♗e7+ ♔e8 32.♕xb5 mate was best avoided. He had overlooked the following check: 29...gxf6 30.♕xf6



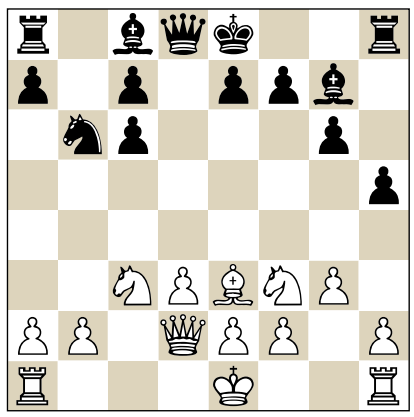
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

30...♕h2+!, after which White must either exchange into a hopeless ending or face catastrophic losses, e.g. 31.♔f1 (31.♔xh2 ♘g4+ 32.♔g2 ♘xf6) 31...♕h1+ 32.♔e2 ♖xa2+ 33.♔d3 (33.♖xa2 ♖xa2+ 34.♔d3 ♕b1+ 35.♔d4 ♕a1+) 33...♖8a3+! 34.♔d4 ♕xa1+. Seeing this my opponent resigned.

The next round I faced local hero Salem A.R. Saleh, a young and rising star.

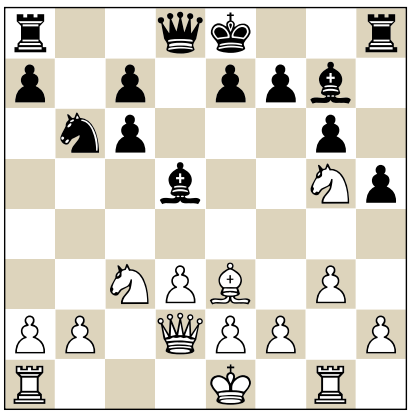
EO 53.8 – A16
Nigel Short
A.R. Saleh Salem
Al Ain World Cities 2012 (3)

1.c4 I have played this a number of times over the past few years, with quite good results, although, for some reason, it still tends to surprise people. **1...♘f6 2.♘c3 d5 3.cxd5 ♘xd5 4.g3 ♘b6 5.♗g2 g6 6.d3 ♗g7 7.♗e3 ♘c6 8.♗xc6+ bxc6 9.♕d2 h5 10.♘f3**

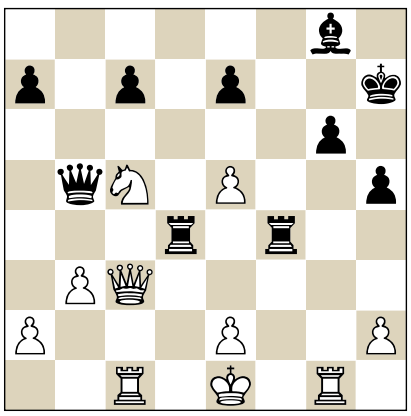


10...♗h3 10...♗g4 is perhaps only a bit better for White. **11.♘g5 ♗g2 12.♖g1 ♗d5** Nowadays it is a cliché that I don't prepare any open-

ings and I am generally happy to let people continue to believe that. The truth, however, is that I had concluded, in my pre-game perusal of my opponent's repertoire, there was a reasonable chance I would obtain this position, or something like it, on the board during the game. My gut instinct was that, with no white weaknesses and fractured black pawns, it could not possibly be any good for Black. After analysing with the computer, I only slightly modified my original optimistic assessment.

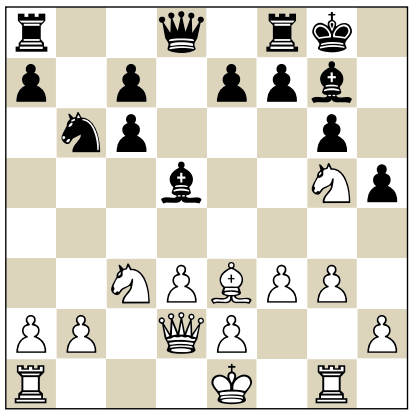


13.f3! In Gibraltar, earlier in the year, Salem had scored an important victory over Alberto David: 13.♖c1 0-0 14.♘ge4?! (a step in the wrong direction; 14.f3 is still just good for White) 14...f5 15.♘c5 ♔h7 16.b3 ♗g8 17.d4 ♕e8 18.♘d3 ♖d8 19.♕b2 ♘d7 20.f4 c5, and White has misplaced his pieces: 21.♘a4 ♘f6 22.♘e5 ♘g4 23.♘xg4 cxd4 24.♘e5 ♗xe5 25.fxe5 dxe3 26.♕c3 f4 27.gxf4 ♖xf4 28.♕xe3 ♖dd4 29.♘c5 ♕b5 30.♕c3?

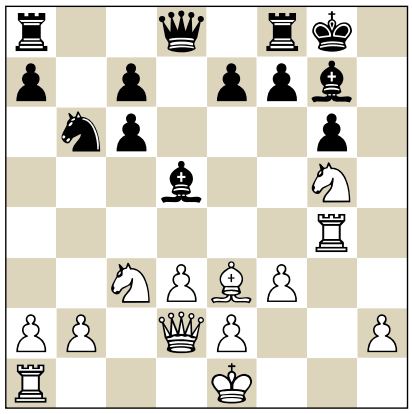


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

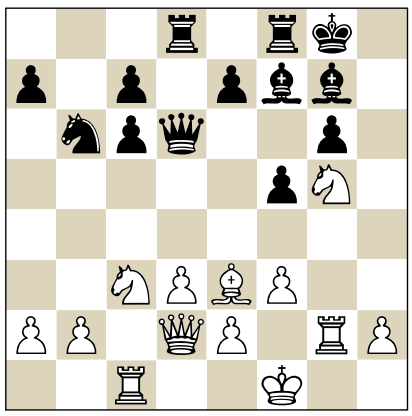
30...♖c4!! 31.bxc4 ♕xc5 32.♖g5 ♕f2+ 0-1, David-Salem, Caleta 2012. **13...0-0**



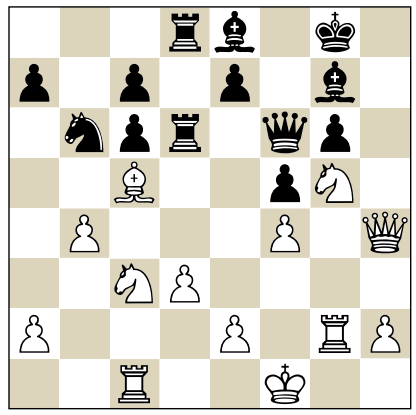
14.g4! In order to generate any sort of counterplay Black, sooner or later, will have to advance his f-pawn, in which case an open g-file is going to cause acute discomfort. **14...hxg4** There was an argument for 14...h4, although it is understandable why Black was reluctant to do this as the pawn can drop off at any moment. **15.♖xg4**



15...f5 Ugly, but if 15...f6, 16.♘xd5 exploits the weak e6-square. **16.♖g2 ♕d6 17.♖c1** To dissuade Black from playing c5. **17...♖ad8 18.♔f1 ♗f7** To clear the d5-square for the knight. Alas, it opens up another opportunity...



19.♕e1 ♗e8 Like in a traffic jam, the pieces impede each other. **20.♕h4 ♖f6 21.b4** Securing c5, from where the bishop will contribute to the attack. **21...♕e5 22.♗c5 ♖fd6 23.f4 ♕f6**



24.♕h7+ The direct 24.e4 fxe4 25.♘cxe4 ♕f5 26.♘xd6 exd6 27.♖e1, aiming to penetrate with the knight on e6, was apparently also crushing. **24...♔f8 25.♕h3 ♔g8 26.e4 ♘d7** 26...fxe4 27.♘cxe4 ♕xf4+ (27...♕f5 28.♕xf5 gxf5 29.♘xd6 exd6 30.♗xb6 axb6 31.♘e6) 28.♖f2 ♕xc1+ 29.♔g2 leads to a brisk mate, e.g. 29...♖f6 30.♕h7+ ♔f8 31.♖xf6+ ♗xf6 32.♘e6 mate.

27.e5 The preliminary 27.♕h7+! ♔f8 28.♕h4, covering the f4-square, was even more devastating but, quite frankly, it doesn't matter. **27...♘xe5 28.fxe5 ♕xe5 29.♗xd6 ♖xd6 30.♘e2** Black resigned.

Unfortunately that was as good as it got. On Christmas Day I played like a total prat against Papaioannou from Peristeri, Athens, overlooking one move after another. Simon Williams continued his wretched form and so we sank to a 3-1 defeat and a disappointing exit. Nevertheless, all in all, it was a positive experience. ■

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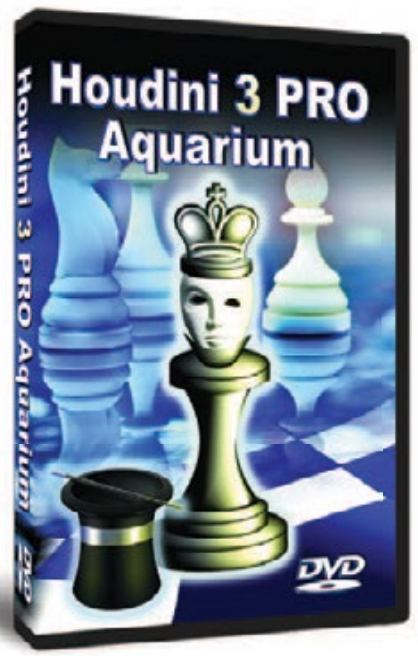

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Anish Giri in Beijing. Conversing with Peter Leko and Laurent Fressinet. And (below) showing Alexander Morozevich his best poker face.

Of Minds and World Cities

When it comes to winter holidays, every chess player has his or her own idea of what to do and how to make the best of it. Some decide to participate in a Christmas tournament with their friends, freezing on their way to the playing hall. Others, smarter perhaps, seek out an event in an ever-warm country. Some even go so far as to forget about the beloved 64 squares, going on a vacation and leaving their laptops at home. **Anish Giri**, our new force on the editorial team, eventually found himself combining all these activities on a two-week tour that took him to the Mind Games in Beijing and the World Cities Team Championship in Al Ain, United Arab Emirates.

To begin with, let me make it plain that I won't tell you how it happened that I had to change time zones three times, winning and losing days like pawns, and why I glued one event to another. I won't tell you, just because I do not know myself. Instead, I will tell you what my trip resulted in and what happened on the chessboard and around it.

My first stop was China. For the second year running, Beijing hosted the Sport Accord World Mind Games, and obviously our royal game has found its comfortable niche in that event. This year the lineup was even stronger than in the inaugural event, with almost all rapid and blitz experts present: Grischuk, Karjakin, Nakamura, Aronian, Morozevich, Mamedyarov, Radjabov, etc.; otherwise I would have to name all the participants.

Summing up my result, I scored +7 on hours (time zone) and –7 on the chessboard. As always, there are many stories behind those cold numbers. I arrived one day in advance, as many participants did, but my efforts to adjust in such a short period were in vain. To briefly paint you the picture: I collapsed, fully dressed, with my laptop displaying Google search results on 'How to fight jetl...'.

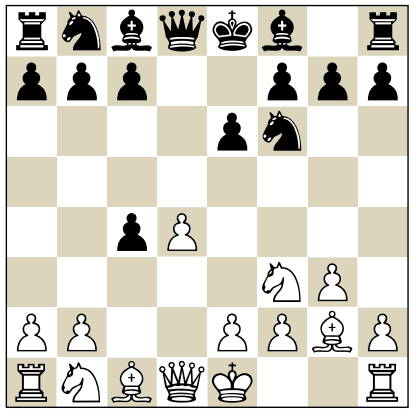
After oversleeping and missing pretty much all the ceremonies (which luckily weren't obligatory) I decided to keep myself in shape with some exercises and brisk walks. I can say that I did a much better job than last year, when my stay in China was pretty much limited to watching movies, losing games, going to restaurants and sleeping.

As the tournament consisted of three disciplines (rapid, blitz and blindfold), I was pretty optimistic at the outset, having all of them still ahead of me. Day by day this supposedly never-dying optimism was diminishing, but let's take things slowly and one by one.

My first opponent in the rapid tournament was Grischuk, who is known for his passion for fast chess. As I felt that his mood was a bit too good, I decided to play the Petroff, and eventually after some ups and downs we drew. My next game gave me foolish hopes of a great event, and I assume you can understand why.

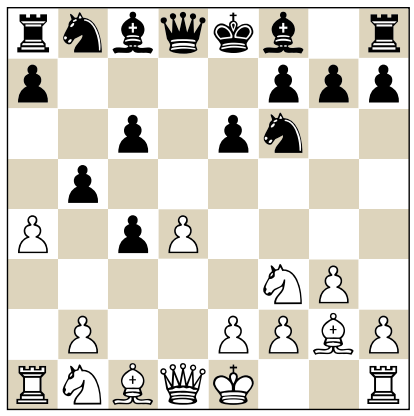
CA 3.1 – E04
Anish Giri
Alexander Morozevich
Beijing rapid 2012 (2)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.g3
I was making moves by hand and somehow the Catalan appeared on the board. **4...dxc4 5.♗g2**

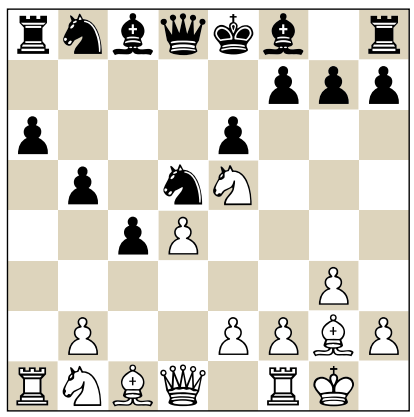


5...b5? This one got me slightly worried, since I knew that I had refuted it; but I also knew that I wouldn't be able to remember the refutation.
After 10 seconds of concentrated situation analysis I came to the conclusion that I would continue making moves by hand and see what happened.

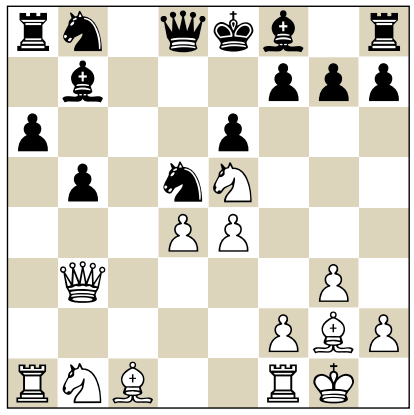
6.a4 c6



7.♘e5 This felt right, as now Black has no time for ...♗b7 and ...a6, so 7...♘d5 is forced.
7...♘d5 8.0-0 a6
Morozevich played everything fast and I was going along with his tempo.
9.axb5 cxb5



10.b3! I couldn't remember the correct idea here. Whether it was 10.e4 followed by 11.d5 right away or 10.b3, or 10.♘c3, but this one felt natural, plus I knew that not much should go wrong as long as I made moves that looked sensible.
10...cxb3 11.♕xb3 ♗b7 12.e4!
Played according to the principle of let's throw all the guys forward and see what comes out of it.



12...♘f6

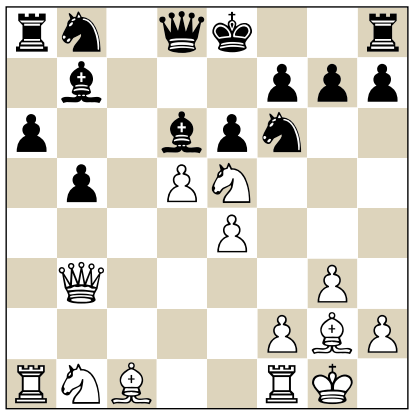
This was played without any doubt. OK, you have a poker face, I also have a poker face, I thought and went on.

I very vaguely remembered 12...♘b4 13.d5! exd5 14.exd5 ♗xd5 15.♕e3!, but I wasn't sure exactly if it would work. It seems I got it right, as here it is very strong. For example: 15...♘c2 16.♕e2! ♘d4 17.♕h5! g6 18.♘xg6!, and Black is getting crushed.

The most solid seemed 12...♘b6, but here, too, 13.d5! will be disastrous for Black: 13...exd5 14.exd5 ♗xd5 15.♕e3.

13.d5! ♗d6

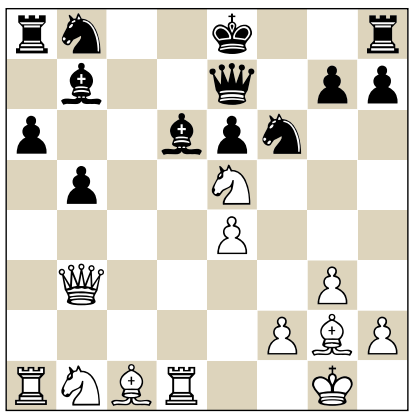
13...exd5 14.exd5 ♗xd5 15.♕e3! has become a classic already.



14.♘xf7!?

I thought for a few seconds about how to sacrifice in the most efficient way. My initial idea 14.dxe6 got fired due to 14...fxe6!, so I took the pawn without too much hesitation. Even though Morozevich still looked as if nothing was happening, I felt that it just couldn't be true.

In fact, 14.dxe6!? wins: 14...fxe6! 15.♖d1 (I missed the following brilliant idea) 15...♕e7



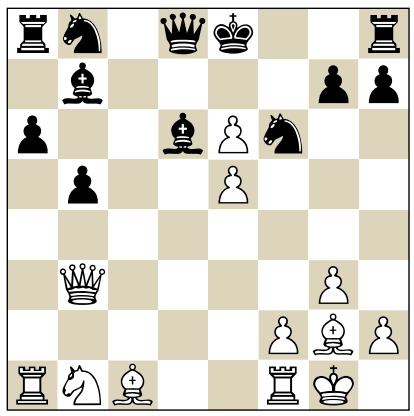
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

Amid bridge and go players, the chess players come marching in. Among them Alexander Grischuk, Victoria Cmilyte, Elisabeth Pähtz and Kateryna Lahno.

16.♘d3!. A very strong move. Now e5 is a threat and 16...e5 is met by the devastating 17.♘xe5!! and the more you look at the position the more you will see that Black is just totally lost. After the game, having checked his notes, Morozevich told me that this was his analysis. I assume he had decided that since I had never mated a grandmaster before (usually I queen some pawns in some endgames), I wouldn't manage to do it in this game either.

14...♔xf7 15.dxe6+ ♔e8 16.e5!

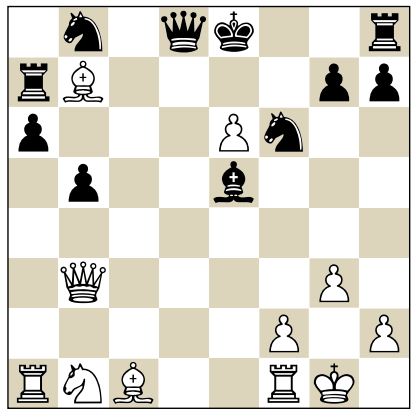
The most powerful move. I briefly projected the line that we would get in the game and saw that I was no more than just a rook down and so I decided to go for it.



16...♗xg2

Now I decided that to avoid any embarrassment I should calculate some lines at once. Eventually I figured out which piece to take.

The line that I saw when going 14.♘xf7 was 16...♗xe5 17.♗xb7 ♖a7

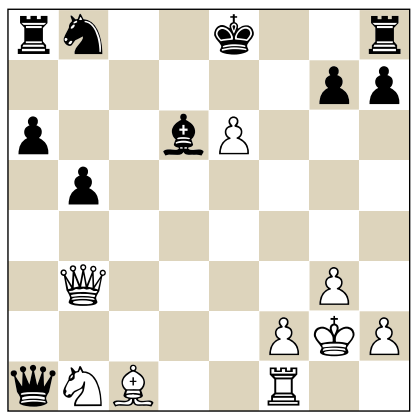


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

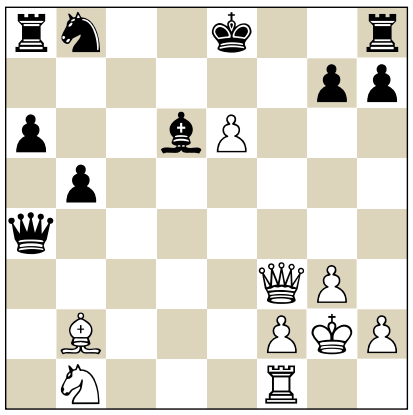
18.♗xa6!!, and I was extremely happy with it: 18...♗xa1 19.♗xb5+ ♔f8 20.♗a3+.

17.exf6 ♕xf6 18.♔xg2 ♕xa1

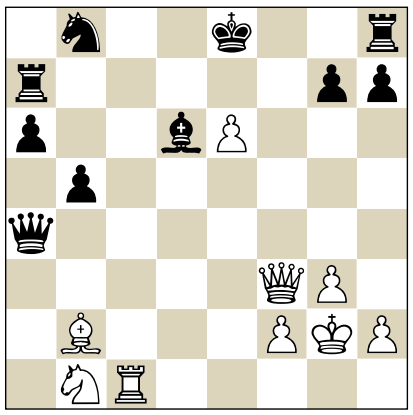
Here I paused for a moment. My options included 19.♕d5, 19.♘c3 and 19.♗b2, with the last two being the most tempting. Perhaps I didn't take enough time, but once I had noticed the 21.♖c1! idea I couldn't stop myself.



19.♗b2?
Unfortunately I failed to see the point of 19.♘c3! ♕a5 20.♘e4!. This felt slow, but right now I am pretty much embarrassed watching my computer going all wild, showing that I have more than one easy win.
19...♕a4 20.♕f3!?
Now, objectively speaking I let Black escape, but we both were playing way too carelessly and too fast. Finally my intuition proved to be better, but hopefully next time I will be able to prove that my calculation can be better too.
My initial idea was 20.♕d5, back when I went into all this mess, but then I noticed that Black holds with 20...♕c4! 21.♕xa8 ♕c6+! 22.♕xc6+ ♘xc6, although my back-up line was 23.f4!, when Black still has some questions to answer.



20...♖a7??
Played without thought, but I get exactly what I was hoping for.
20...♕c2! was a genius save. The point is that after 21.♖c1 Black has 21...♖f8!!, saving the game.
21.♖c1!
And it's all over, as the rook is joining in with the deadly threat of ♖c8+.



21...♔d8?
Now anything wins, but since I already was in piece-sacrificing mood, I went for one more.
The only move to prolong the suffering was 21...♖c7!, but Black is still lost: 22.♖xc7 ♗xc7 23.♗xg7 ♔e7!. Now, surprisingly, there is no forced win and White has to be satisfied with an extra pawn and a winning position: 24.♘c3 ♕c4 25.♕f7+ ♔d6 26.♗xh8 ♕xe6 27.♕xh7. White's plan will be combining the advance of his h-pawn with occasional unpleasant checks.
22.♗f6+! ♗e7
22...gxf6 loses after the straightforward line: 23.♕xf6+ ♖e7 24.♕xh8+ ♖e8 25.♕f6+ ♗e7 26.♕e5!.
23.♕d5+ ♘d7 24.♗d4
And Black is dead.
24...♖c7 25.♕a8+
Up to this moment my opponent hadn't blinked, and even here he didn't. Instead he shook my hand.

However, this was pretty much the highlight of the day for me, as I then lost to Fressinet and to Radjabov.

The next day started with a 'Good morning' from Jobava, continued with 1.b3 and ended somewhere around moves 10-15 after my blunders. Fortunately, I didn't collapse completely, as Mamedyarov was completely off form and even though my hands were shaking, I managed to convert a full extra piece. My hopes for 50 per cent dwindled when a grinning Hao found an over-the-board novelty, improving on an old game Adams-Kasparov, where Garry Kimovich, at his best with 2851, got himself into some trouble.

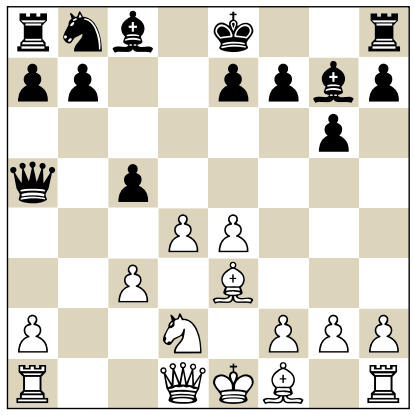
And so it was –1 for me, as I watched with jealousy how everyone at the top was desperately committing suicide, one after another, against the ultra-solid and sharp Laurent Fressinet. He clinched a convincing victory in the rapid event.

Guess which game he considered his best effort and therefore chose to annotate for you.

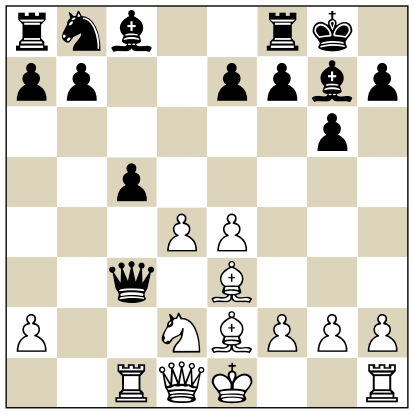
NOTES BY
Laurent Fressinet

GI 4.8 – D85
Laurent Fressinet
Anish Giri
Beijing Rapid 2012 (3)

I had prepared seriously for these World Mind Games, as it only happens very rarely that I have the chance to face the world elite. I was convinced that if I was in good form and with a little bit of luck I would be able to get a good result. I have to confess that my gold medal in the rapid games greatly exceeded my expectations!
I had only played against Anish once, but we had been team mates in the recent Spanish team championships. On that occasion I had noticed that he is extremely well prepared for the openings...
1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.c4 ♗g7 4.♘c3 d5
Like all ambitious and well prepared young players, Anish plays the Grünfeld. What else!?
5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.e4 ♘xc3 7.bxc3 c5 8.♗e3 ♕a5 9.♘d2



A line that I had prepared especially for this tournament. I don't think that one can consider a variation that has already been played by Aronian as a 'sub-variation', but this move is pretty rare at top level.
9...0-0
During my preparation I assessed castling as promising little for Black. Anish clearly thought differently...
10.♗e2 ♕xc3 11.♖c1

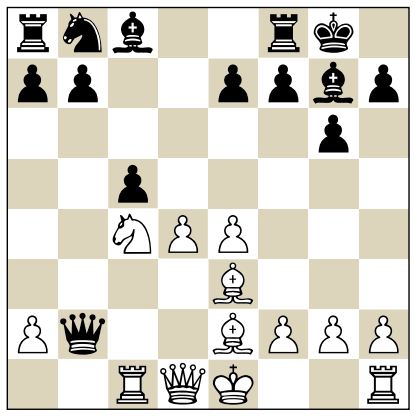


11...♕b2

A novelty that Anish played immediately and confidently! Naively enough, I had only looked at 11...♕a5 12.♖xc5 ♕xa2 13.0-0, and here I had seen a great number of options for Black. Generally speaking, White's enormous advantage in development and occupation of the centre compensate lavishly for the sacrificed pawn.

12.♘c4!?

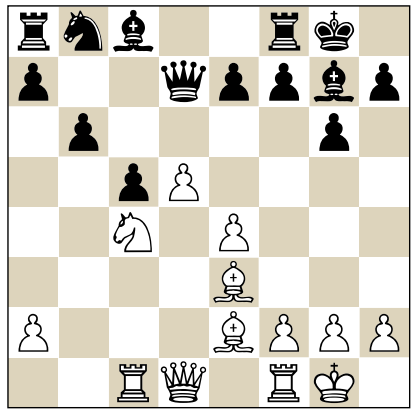
12.♖c2 is the logical move, hoping to fall back on the variation mentioned above after 12...♕a3 13.♖xc5, but compared to the line after 11...♕a5, the queen is not attacked here, and instead of taking the pawn, Black can complete his development by attacking the white centre with 13...♘c6!. After 14.♕b3 ♕xb3 15.♘xb3 a5 (or 15...♖d8) White may have a very slight advantage.



12...♕b5

12...♕b4+!? forces the white bishop to return to d2 and allows Black to push his b- and c-pawns one square further! After 13.♗d2 ♕b5 14.d5 ♕e8 (this is the difference – with the bishop on d2, the pawn on c5 is no longer hanging) 15.0-0 b5 16.♘a5 c4 Black stands better than in the game, but this is not a cure for everything either!

13.d5 b6 14.0-0 ♕d7



This is the moment to assess the outcome of the opening: as compensation for the sacrificed pawn, White is better developed and occupies the centre, whereas Black has problems develop-

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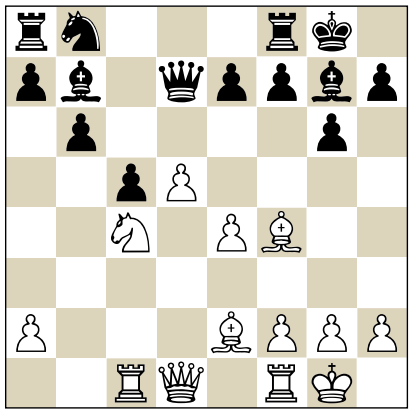
ing his pieces in a natural manner. As Anish rightly remarked after the game, the extra pawn that Black has does not really count, as it is practically impossible to exploit the majority on the queenside. I hesitated a long time (way too long for a rapid game!) between 15.f4 and 15.♗f4. I was convinced that I had to stop Black from playing ...e5.

15.♗f4

I was not sure about 15.f4 in view of 15...e6!? 16.dxe6 fxe6. Now that the d5-pawn has disappeared, Black's white-squared bishop can be activated: 17.♗f3 (or 17.e5 ♗b7 18.♘d6 ♗d5 19.♗f3 ♗xf3 20.♕xf3 ♘c6) 17... ♗b7.

15...♗b7

Another way to play was 15...♗a6, with the idea of quickly developing the knight on d7: 16.♕b3 ♕b7 17.♗f3 ♘d7 18.e5, and White has the initiative, since the black queen is badly placed.



16.♖e1

An inaccuracy. Better was 16.♕b3!, preserving the option of putting the rook on d1 and aiming to prevent ...f5. Now 16...f5 is typical of the computer and the only active option, but I doubt that a human would play like this: 17.♘e5! ♕d6 18.♘d3 ♕d7, and here the simple 19.♗f3 keeps the advantage. As always, the computer prefers to enter enormous complications with 19.♘xc5!? bxc5 20.♖xc5 ♘a6 21.♖b5 ♗c8 22.d6+ ♔h8 23.♕d5! exd6 24.♕xa8 ♘c7 25.♕b8 ♘xb5 26.♗xb5, and Black will be a pawn up; he will win the pawn on d6.

16...♖d8

CALLE ERLANDSSON

Laurent Fressinet: 'I have to confess that my gold medal in the rapid games greatly exceeded my expectations!'

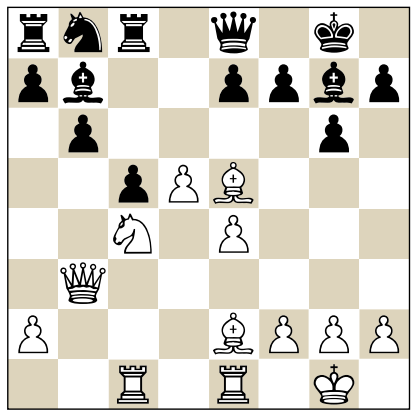
Better was 16...f5!, an active move that probably allows Black to solve his problems. It may look strange for Black to open up the position before finishing his development, but it exploits the fact that the bishop on f4 is 'hanging in the air'. The following line shows that, once again, the computer is right: 17.♘e3 fxe4 18.♗g4 ♕e8 19.♗e6+ ♔h8 20.♕g4 ♗c8! followed by ...♘d7, and there is little left of the white centre.

17.♕b3

White has consolidated, and it is clear that he is better.

17...♕e8 18.♗c7 ♖c8 19.♗e5

My idea is to exchange the only active black piece: the bishop on g7.



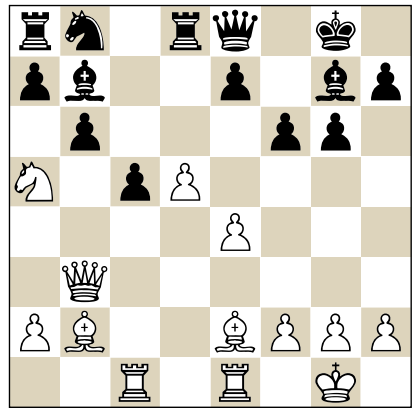
19...f6?!

19...♘d7! 20.♗xg7 ♔xg7 21.♗f3 was the lesser evil, but White retains a position that is more than pleasant.

20.♗b2 ♖d8 21.♗g4

My plan not to rush to convert my advantage had almost tricked me. It was time to calculate a bit and take action.

Here 21.♘a5! was almost winning:



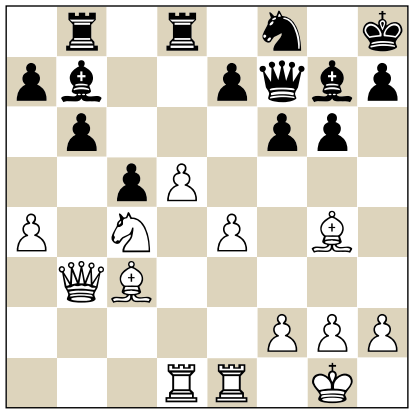
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

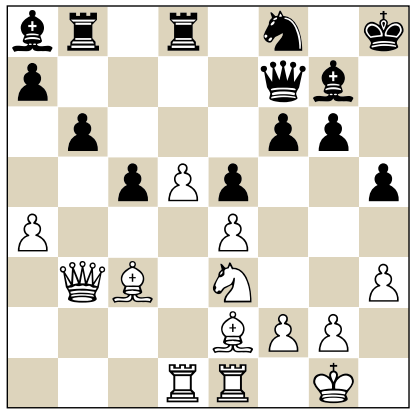
– 21...♗c8 22.♘c6! ♘xc6 23.dxc6+ ♕f7 24.♗c4 e6 25.♖cd1, and Black is paralysed;

– 21...♗a6 22.♘c6! ♖d6 23.e5 fxe5 24.♘xe5 ♗xe2 25.♖xe2 ♘d7 26.♘c4! (White wins material) 26...♗xb2 27.♘xd6 ♕f8 28.♕xb2 exd6 29.♖e6, and it is very hard to believe that Black will save the game.

21...♘d7 22.♗e6+ ♔h8 23.♖cd1 ♘f8 24.♗g4 ♕f7 25.a4 ♖ab8 26.♗c3

I continue with my wish to prevent any counterplay! But it was time, here or on one of the previous moves, to play more aggressively and to gain space with 26.f4!.





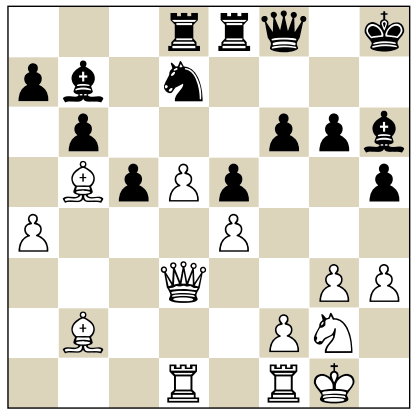
26...♗a8 Now 26...e6! would have allowed Black to come back into the game: 27.dxe6 (27.♘e3 exd5 28.exd5 f5! 29.♗xg7+ ♕xg7 30.♗f3 ♖e8) 27...♕e7! (the move I had missed; 27...♘xe6?? just loses a piece after 28.♘d6!) 28.♖xd8 ♖xd8 29.e5 f5 30.♘d6 ♘xe6, and Black definitely has a playable position.

27.h3 h5 28.♗e2 e6 29.♘e3! e5 After 29...exd5 30.♘xd5 ♗xd5 31.exd5 ♖d6 32.♗c4 the open e-file doesn't improve matters for Black.

30.♖f1!
Now White has a clear goal: pushing f4 under the right circumstances.

30...♘d7 31.♗c4 ♗h6 32.♗b2 ♗b7 33.♕d3
Preventing a possible ...a6, followed by ...b5, which doesn't seem to be possible, but with little time on my clock and considering my position strategically winning, I wanted to avoid any unnecessary complications.

33...♕f8 34.g3 ♖e8 35.♗b5 ♖bd8 36.♘g2!
I have regrouped my pieces, and now the f4 push can no longer be stopped.



36...♗g7?! A better chance was 36...♕d6 37.f4 exf4 38.♘xf4 ♗xf4 39.gxf4 ♔h7 40.♕f3, but with such an initiative against the black king, it is hard to imagine that Black will be able to resist for very long.

37.f4 c4 A desperate try, but there no longer was any good advice for Black.

38.♕xc4 ♕c5+
I don't know what Anish had missed, but it is clear that the exchange of

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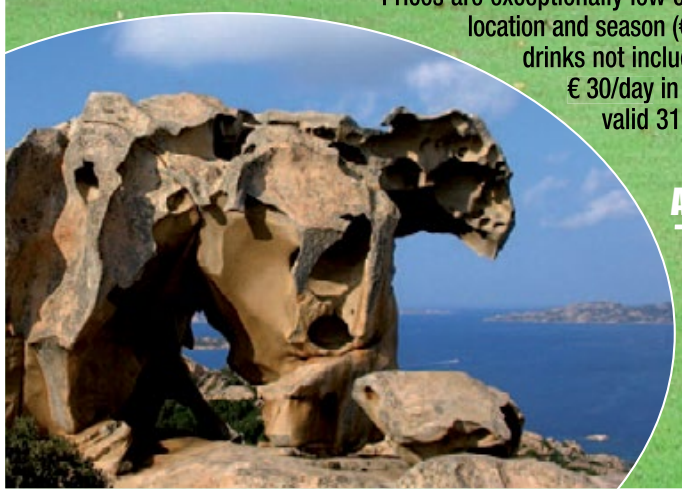

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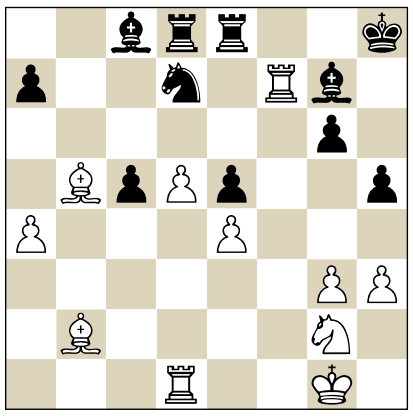
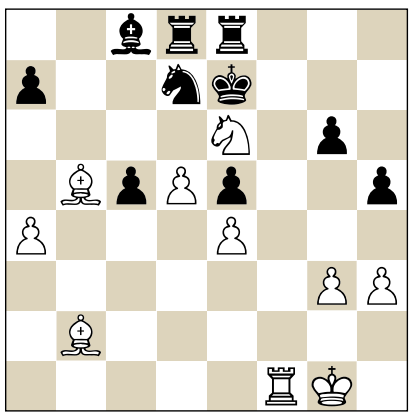
queens greatly eased my task, particularly with the little time I had left.
39.♕xc5 bxc5 40.fxe5 fxe5 41.♖f7 ♗c8



42.♘f4! The last point, which allows me to win material.
42...♔g8 43.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 44.♘e6+ ♔f6 45.♖f1+ ♔e7



46.♗c1! White wins a piece, as the black rook is locked in by its own pieces. **46...a6 47.♗g5+ ♔d6 48.♗c6** Black resigned.

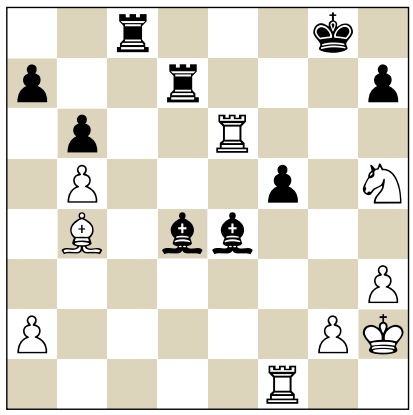
■ ■ ■

I arrived at my very best for the blitz, having finally had a perfect night's sleep and an excellent morning. Still, one can never know what to expect, and already after my second and third game, in which I had risk-free positions and blundered two rooks (one per game), I realized that an excellent morning is far from a perfect key to success. I kept on playing very well during parts of the games, but all of them were decided by my blunders and the only thing that still made me smile was watching Levon (who was the only one I didn't blunder against) shake his head after every one of my losses.

The winner of the blitz, Sergey Karjakin (here in action against Peter Leko), showed incredible stability and cleaned up with one round to spare.

On the second day of the blitz tournament things began in the same fashion, with me drawing when I was lucky and losing when not. Fortunately, I got absolutely desperate and finished the event with three victories in a row and even ruining the chances of some people (the aforementioned Fressinet, who lost to me in the last round while he was heading for the podium).

The winner of the blitz, Sergey Karjakin, showed incredible stability (and probably had some luck, a conclusion that is based on my personal encounter against him) and cleaned up with one round to spare. He finished with a bang, destroying living legend Vassily Mikhailovich Ivanchuk. In fact, destroying him pretty literally, to go by Ivanchuk's reaction.



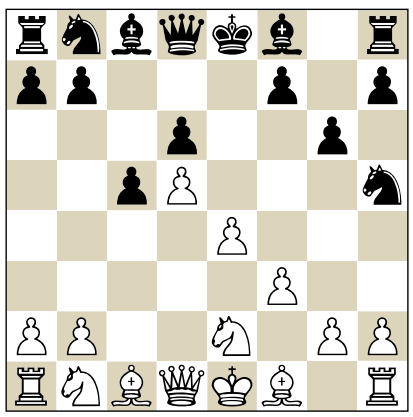
Karjakin-Ivanchuk
Beijing blitz 2012 (14)
position after 34.♘h5

Earlier in this game, Sergey got slightly outplayed. Here, however, he... well, he hasn't really set a deadly trap, but Ivanchuk managed to fall for it anyway. A typical situation for blitz. I can tell, believe me, I know. **34...♖c2?? 35.♖xe4!** Black resigned. 35.♖e8+ ♔f7 36.♖xe4 is a dual in this study ☺.

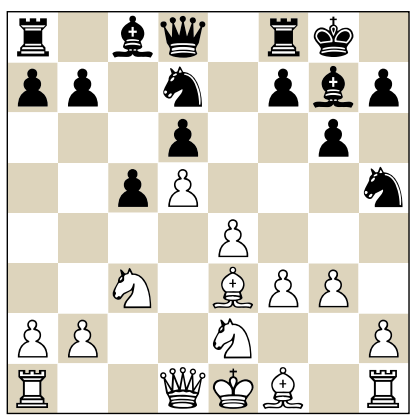
The Mind Games ended with the blindfold tournament, to which I was eagerly looking forward. And not just because I would start the competition with 50 per cent and not –6 as was the case on the second day of blitz, but also because I always feel very comfortable in that discipline. Comfortable or not, my opponents seemed to hold the mouse with a steady hand (no, it's not an expression, I am speaking of the computer mouse used for the blindfold) as well, and after making another draw with Grischuk, I lost a very disappointing game to Radjabov, as I was unable to defend a slightly worse position with only increments on the clock. The rounds lasted very long, and after yet another fire-proof Petroff (dro, obviously) against Kamsky I decided to set a high pace in my last game. I kept blitzing out my moves against Ivanchuk and just as it was in the rapid against Morozevich, thinking less turned out to work well for me.

KI 81.3 – E60
Anish Giri
Vassily Ivanchuk
Beijing blindfold 2012 (4)

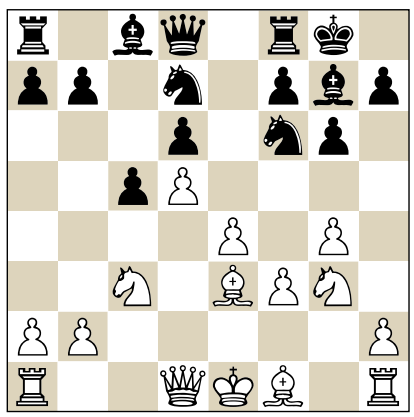
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6
In our last game in London I got into some old line in the Grünfeld. Now I didn't really want a theoretical discussion, but I was still curious and wanted to see what Ivanchuk would offer me in the following hypermodern line.
3.f3 c5 I have studied these systems in detail, being a Grünfeld and a King's Indian player myself, so I was eager to show what I know.
4.d5 e6
I am not sure Ivanchuk really knew all the finesses here, but I forgave him all the move order experiments.
5.e4
5.♘h3! is an extra option here. I remembered it right after I played 5. e4 without thinking.
5...exd5 6.cxd5 d6 7.♘e2
I decided to choose the career for this knight first, just like Vishy did in his game against Gelfand.
7...♘h5?!
I think this is a very suspicious plan, especially in this version, but my reaction was just incredibly bad.



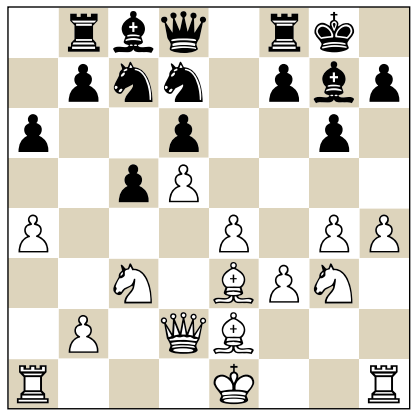
8.g3?? Played after 3 seconds. First of all I had the feeling the bishop was on g7 already, so 8.♗e3 seemed impossible, but why I didn't play the simple 8.♘bc3 remains a mystery to me. Maybe I assumed ...♕h4+ was a threat, but then again I am a grandmaster, sort of. For the next couple of moves I was so angry with myself that I played pretty much all the game very fast, trying to forget this moment as quickly as possible.
8...♗g7
Surprise. Pleasant to know you have a tempo more than you thought.
9.♘bc3 0-0 10.♗e3 ♘d7



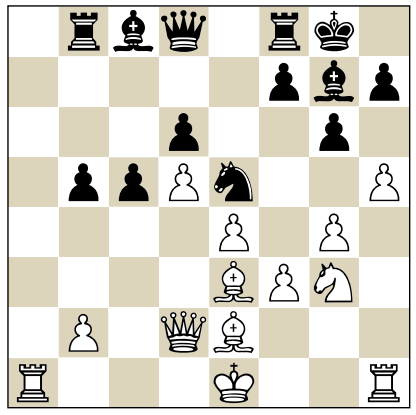
11.g4!?
For a while I considered pretending that my move g3 had at least some point and thought of putting the bishop on g2, but I decided that it's better to admit what there was to admit and pretend that even a tempo down the position is still very dangerous for Black. I like the bishop on g2 in all the openings, but in the Benoni I think it's placed very inappropriately.
11...♘hf6?!
11...♘e5! leads to a mega-mess in which Black is doing not so badly, for example 12.♘g3 f5!?, and to be honest my feeling is that White is going to be in trouble.
12.♘g3



Now I was more or less happy. I have a good position, OK a tempo down, but then again it was more than what I deserved.
12...a6 13.a4 ♖b8 14.♗e2 ♘e8 15.♕d2 ♘c7 16.h4

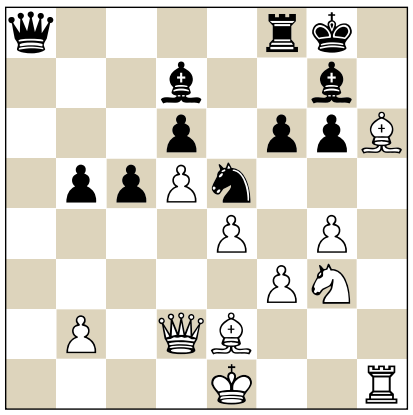


I had very mixed feelings about this position. On the one hand I am opening the h-file, on the other I am not mating yet. At the same time, Black's counterplay can unroll pretty fast once ...b5 comes.
16...b5 17.axb5 ♘xb5 18.♘xb5 axb5 19.h5 ♘e5 19...♕f6!? got me worried, but I can imagine that Ivanchuk didn't trust this move, as it demands very precise calculation.



20.♗g5!
I got pretty worried about ...♘c4, with very strong counterplay against the b2-pawn, and was fortunate to realize that I have this strong antidote.
20...f6 21.♗f4 I wasn't sure where to put the bishop and to be honest I still wasn't sure after I had played the move. 21.♗e3!? gives the extra idea of f4.
21...♗d7 22.hxg6 hxg6 23.♖a7!?
After spending quite a few minutes calculating f4!? and realizing that it's pretty much impossible with the bishop on f4, I decided to make a legal move after all.
23...♖a8 24.♖xa8 ♕xa8 25.♗h6
I had really no idea what was going on, but somehow I kept on making reasonable moves.

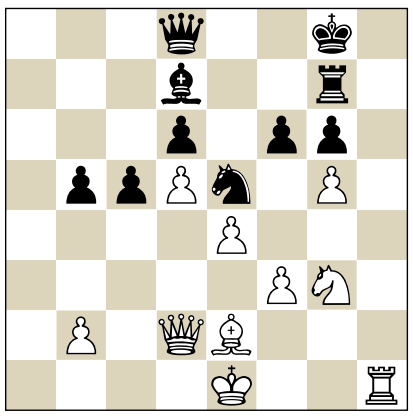
Anish Giri, happy to start another blindfold game: 'Maybe I assumed ♕h4+ was a threat, but then again I am a grandmaster, sort of.'



25...♖f7?! 25...♘f7 looks safer. Now 26.♗e3 was the move Ivanchuk didn't like, but he has 26...♘e5!, and since the threat is ... ♔f7, followed by ...♖h8, there would have been a good chance of a move repetition here.

26.♗xg7 ♖xg7 27.g5! Now I felt I was getting some initiative and I got some hope.

27...♕d8



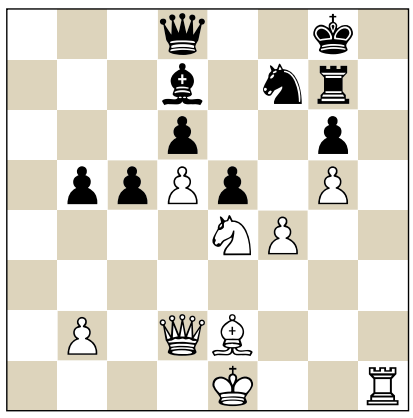
28.f4 28.gxf6 ♕xf6 29.♕h6 was also tempting: 29...♖f7 (29...♔f7? 30.f4! ♘c4 31.♗xc4 bxc4 32.e5!) 30.f4 ♘g4 31.♗xg4 ♗xg4, and White can push e5 and f5, but in both cases Black should be able to defend: 32.e5 dxe5 33.♘e4 ♕g7 34.♕xg7+ ♔xg7 35.fxe5 ♖f5! 36.♖h4 ♗h5 37.d6 ♔f7 38.d7 ♔e7 39.e6 ♖d5, and Black holds.

28...♘f7

I was looking for some tactic and was pleasantly surprised to find one:

29.e5! fxe5 30.♘e4!

Now the knight joins the attack and it all starts looking like fun for White.



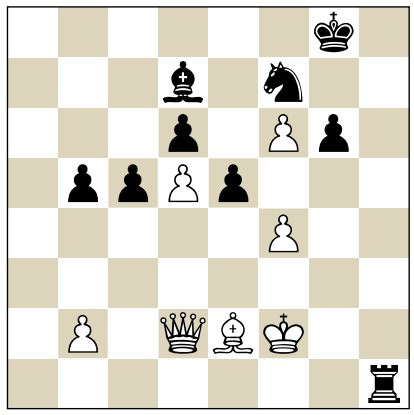
30...♖h7!!

An incredible defensive resource, which Ivanchuk went for intuitively, but he failed to find the follow-up.

31.♘f6+

I was confused for a while, but then I decided to pause for a moment and evaluate the position arising after the queen sacrifice. It didn't take long for me to realize that I was not taking any risk, so I happily went there.

31...♕xf6 32.gxf6 ♖xh1+ 33.♔f2

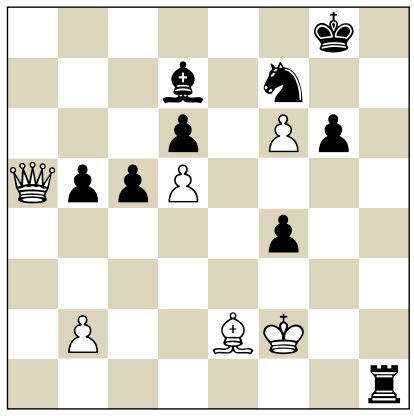


33...exf4??

By now I had already seen the winning idea.

33...♖h4! was the only move and I saw it, but I assumed I would have some trick or some smart manoeuvre somehow, somewhere... 34.fxe5 ♘xe5 35.♕a5 (35.♔g3?! ♖h3+ 36.♔g2 was one of my ideas, but Black can stop the queen from penetrating with 36...b4! 37.b3 – now the queen comes too slow – 37...♔f7! 38.♕a2 ♔xf6 39.♗b5 ♖h7, and White is even in trouble) 35...♖f4+ 36.♔g3 ♖xf6, and it's a draw.

34.♕a5!



Now it's over. **34...♖h2+ 35.♔e1 ♖h8 36.♕c7** The queen enters Black's camp, which is full of uncoordinated pieces. **36...♗f5 37.♕e7** Black resigned.

The winner of the blindfold section was Levon Aronian, who finally managed to play stable chess after his terrible performances in London, and the rapid and blitz in Beijing. It would be easy to present a vast selection of

Beijing 2012 blitz

1	Sergey Karjakin	RUS	2877	12½
2	Hikaru Nakamura	USA	2788	11
3	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	AZE	2701	9
4	Levon Aronian	ARM	2812	9
5	Laurent Fressinet	FRA	2653	9
6	Alexander Morozevich	RUS	2805	8½
7	Alexander Grischuk	RUS	2923	8½
8	Vassily Ivanchuk	UKR	2728	8
9	Wang Hao	CHN	2737	6½
10	Peter Leko	HUN	2732	6½
11	Gata Kamsky	USA	2756	6
12	Baadur Jobava	GEO	2722	5½
13	Teimour Radjabov	AZE	2790	5½
14	Victor Bologan	MDA	2643	5½
15	Anish Giri	NED	2720	5
16	Ding Liren	CHN	2695	4

16 players, 15 rounds

Beijing 2012 rapid

1	Laurent Fressinet	FRA	2700	5½
2	Hikaru Nakamura	USA	2760	5½
3	Alexander Grischuk	RUS	2771	4½
4	Ding Liren	CHN	2669	4½
5	Alexander Morozevich	RUS	2725	4
6	Teimour Radjabov	AZE	2755	4
7	Gata Kamsky	USA	2762	3½
8	Peter Leko	HUN	2732	3½
9	Baadur Jobava	GEO	2711	3½
10	Wang Hao	CHN	2691	3½
11	Anish Giri	NED	2720	3
12	Sergey Karjakin	RUS	2830	3
13	Levon Aronian	ARM	2815	2½
14	Vassily Ivanchuk	UKR	2744	2
15	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	AZE	2760	2
16	Victor Bologan	MDA	2693	1½

16 players, 7 rounds

Beijing 2012 blindfold

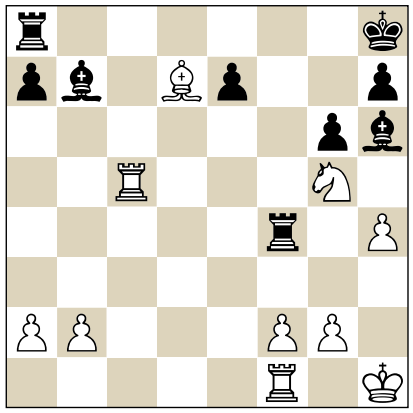
1	Levon Aronian	ARM	2815	5½
2	Hikaru Nakamura	USA	2760	5
3	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	AZE	2760	4½
4	Gata Kamsky	USA	2762	4½
5	Peter Leko	HUN	2732	4
6	Ding Liren	CHN	2669	4
7	Teimour Radjabov	AZE	2755	4
8	Victor Bologan	MDA	2693	3½
9	Alexander Morozevich	RUS	2725	3½
10	Wang Hao	CHN	2691	3½
11	Anish Giri	NED	2720	3
12	Vassily Ivanchuk	UKR	2744	3
13	Sergey Karjakin	RUS	2830	2½
14	Alexander Grischuk	RUS	2771	2½
15	Baadur Jobava	GEO	2711	2
16	Laurent Fressinet	FRA	2700	1

16 players, 7 rounds

beautiful blindfold blunders. One such blunder determined the eventual winner.

GI 9.7 – D94
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
Levon Aronian
Beijing blindfold 2012 (4)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.e3 ♗g7 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e2 dxc4 7.0-0 b6 8.e4 ♗b7 9.e5 ♘d5 10.♗xc4 c5 11.e6 fxe6 12.♘g5 ♕d7 13.dxc5 ♘xc3 14.♕xd7 ♘xd7 15.♗xe6+ ♔h8 16.♗xd7 ♘e2+ 17.♔h1 ♘xc1 18.♖axc1 ♗h6 19.h4 bxc5 20.♖xc5 ♖f4 So far so good.



21.♖c4?? ♖xc4

Ouch. And then Aronian was first, and Mamedyarov third.

There was not much time to lick my wounds (which were pretty much non-existent anyway, as the –7 was quickly forgotten after a good visit to a luxury Domino's Pizza), as the next morning I was already watching *The Dark Knight Rises* on the plane to Dubai. I don't know if it was the amount of sleep (i.e. the lack of it) that raised my critical perception of this jewel of modern cinematography, or something else, but I was rather disappointed, having had very high expectations for the poor batman.

As I was on my way to the World Cities Team Championship in Al Ain, I concluded that the Dutch team of Hoogeveen (which consisted of me, Ivan Sokolov, Sergey Tiviakov and Jan Smeets) should rise, just like the dark knight. With this happy thought I went on to spend the rest of my flight asleep.

I am not particularly familiar with Arabic culture, but their clothing has always impressed me. I remember being absolutely overwhelmed to see men in long white dresses all over the airport when I travelled to Nepal, via Dubai, as a child. This time I was somewhat more mature, but by the end of my stay I was still dreaming of walking in one like that myself, being called Sheikh Sultan bin Anish and eating exotic fruits under the sun.

Speaking of sun, the weather was just like in paradise, and other paradisical attributes were at hand too: a 5-star hotel, a swimming pool, a delicious buffet... and what not.

Now, as you may have guessed from my description of the place, our team had an excellent result and you are right. Actually I will be honest with you. I loved the place even before winning the event. I even told Fressinet, who caught my happy eyes during lunch (right after going swimming) that as long as I didn't lose more than 15 Elo points, coming here would have been be a worthwhile investment.

From the very first round we were off to a good tournament, scoring 4-0 against Cairo, and even though I was slightly disappointed by my handling of the opening/middlegame phase against El Gindy, the first round gave me no reason not to be optimistic about my form, as well as that of the team.

The tournament system was extremely creative, and when the proud organizer, and inventor of the system, asked me whether I liked it, I gave him an honest answer – if we win, I will! The system was borrowed, if I am not mistaken, from football events, with qualification groups and a knockout phase. In some sense the Al Ain Chess Classics, an open that was held at the same time, was also part of our event, as the knocked out team members continued to have an opportunity to play chess till the very last moment (not to mention that the rating favourites from France simply did good business after they had been

The final of the World Cities Team Championship between Baku and Hoogeveen has started. On Board 1, Anish Giri faces Eltaj Safarli.

knocked out, with Vachier-Lagrave and Romain Edouard sharing the first two places in the Classics).

We had no problems qualifying from our group. We won against Novi Sad and drew against a very colourful team from Wuxi. Their first board Wang Yue was about 300 points higher rated than Board 2 and 600 points higher than the last board!

Having won our qualification group, we were ready to meet Chicago. After the usual preparation, which included some healthy exercising, the swimming pool, a ve-ery good lunch and an extensive panic-driven repetition of my Grünfeld files, I was ready to face Akobian with black. And, if given the chance, to fight for victory, as Board 1 carries extra weight in the Berlin tie-break system (the board's weight is 4-3-2-1 points).

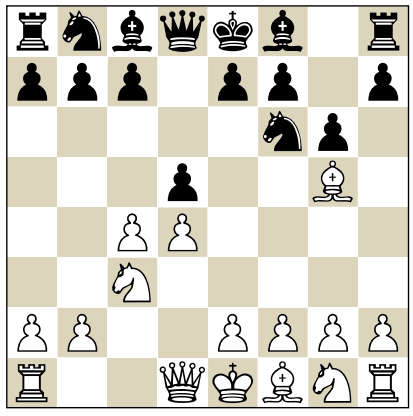
GI 3.5 – D80
Varuzhan Akobian
Anish Giri
Al-Ain World Cities 2012 (1)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5

Lately I find myself playing only the Grünfeld. Somehow you would think it has become easier for people to prepare, but I am still waiting for that one and only who will punish me for not being as clever as I used to be, jumping around and around.

4.♗g5?!

My opponent plays this line most of the time, so I had time to carefully revisit my sharp analysis.



4...♗g7!

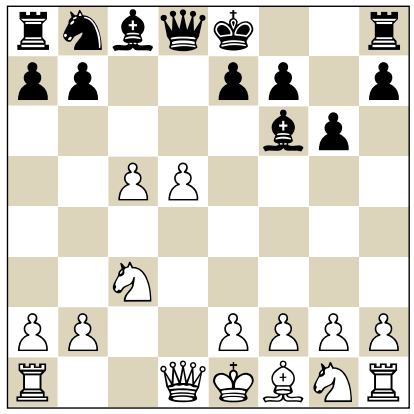
As my teammate Ivan Sokolov said very wisely, if ♗g5 doesn't even threaten to take on f6... then something must be wrong with it. Board 2, always to the point.

5.♗xf6 ♗xf6 6.cxd5 c5!

The right way to use the absence of the dark-squared bishop. It took people ages to come back to this move, but once I had noticed it, it became clear to me I can throw all the sophisticated work on 4...♘e4 away.

7.dxc5

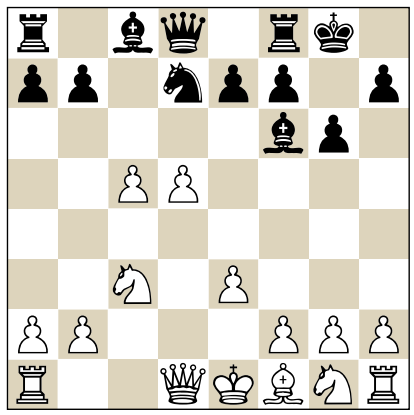
I was very surprised that Akobian already started thinking here. I assumed that he had checked it and was just deciding what to try.



7...♘d7! Gopal's novelty. Unfortunately for him, he lost the game, but he made his sacrifice for us, me and Topalov, who both got excellent positions with this move.

8.e3 A very solid option. Also challenging are 8.♕a4 and 8.c6, but both moves can only be played after careful analysis. 8.e4 is an option too, of course, and was tested by Gupta against Negi, but it was again Black who was on the pushing side.

8...0-0



9.♘f3?!

After this move I finally realized that my opponent wasn't really prepared, and I got ambitious. I had checked this modest e3, ♘f3 approach, which seems like the most solid reaction, but in fact it is far from safe for White.

9.♗c4 is the safe one, and also the move I was expecting. Obviously Black is doing fine here, too: 9...♘xc5 10.♘ge2 ♕a5, and the threat is 11...♘e4, and 11.0-0 is met by 11...♕b4!.

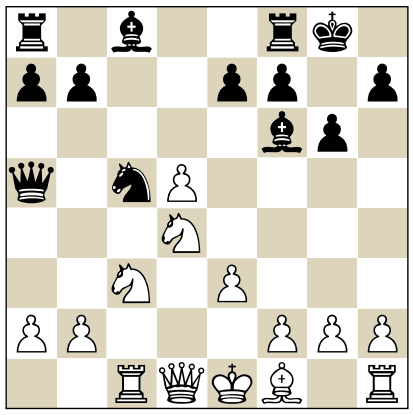
9...♘xc5 10.♘d4

Trying to tame the monster on f6.

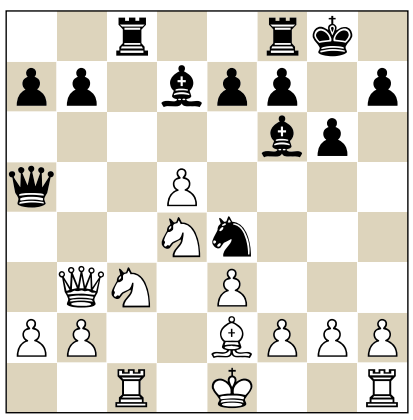
10...♕a5 11.♖c1

This one took me out of book, as I remember it didn't go with the concept that I was checking for White in

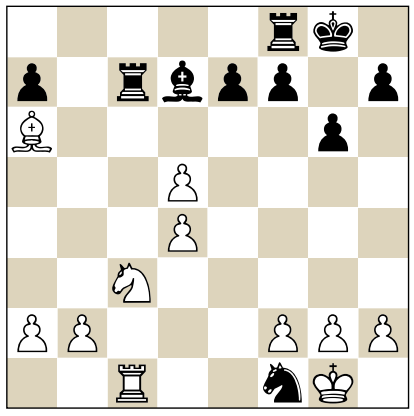
this position, which was to develop as fast as possible. However, I was not too upset, as I felt that I should be able to get good play with some natural moves. 11.♗e2 ♘e4, and Black regains his pawn comfortably.



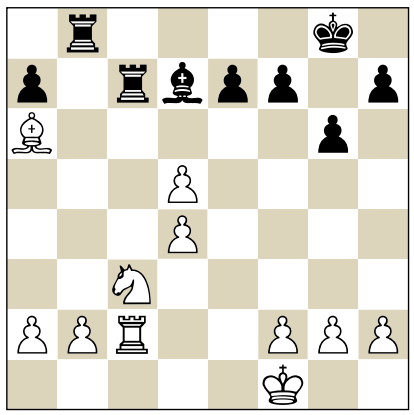
11...♗d7!
The most precise. Black should wait till White decides where to develop his bishop. 11...♘e4?! is met by 12.♗c4!.
12.♗e2 ♘e4!
I was very happy when I suddenly noticed the ...♘d2 idea and realized that I was in fact taking over.
13.♕b3 13.0-0 ♘xc3 14.♖xc3 ♕xd5 is slightly better for Black, but White should have gone for something like this anyway, trying to squeeze out a draw in a long game.
13...♖ac8 Building up the pressure, as White can't castle.



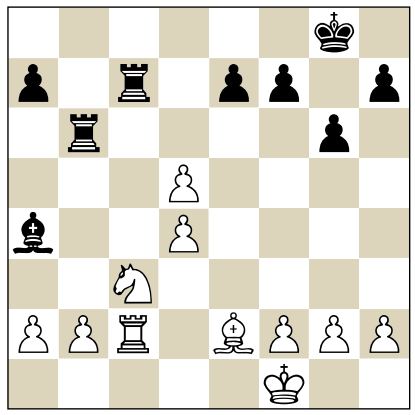
14.0-0?! ♘d2 15.♕xb7 ♗xd4!
The right way to grab the exchange. I had checked and rechecked the lines and was curious to see what my opponent had in mind.
16.exd4
16.♕xd7 was slightly more complicated, but here, too, I saw that I was doing fine: 16...♗xc3. The cleanest way: 17.♖fd1 ♘e4!, and White is losing the exchange, with hardly any hope of survival.
16...♖c7
Now it has become technical and I was pretty sure that the position is easily winning. To my surprise, half of my team, as well as my opponent, thought that the position may be defensible for White, but I can't really understand how they motivate this assessment.
17.♕a6 ♕xa6 18.♗xa6 ♘xf1



19.♔xf1?
Losing on the spot.
After 19.♗xf1 White doesn't lose by force, but he should still be technically lost after the very neat weakening manoeuvre 19...♖b8 20.♖c2 ♖b4 21.♖d2 ♖cb7! 22.♘d1 ♗b5!, and due to the threat of ...♗xf1 and ...♖4b5 White has to lose the c3 outpost for the knight with 23.b3, when he will be doomed after 23...♖c7.
19...♖b8 20.♖c2



20...♖b6!
I was pretty happy to find this idea, but to be honest, something like this had been hanging in the air, with White having such bad piece coordination.
21.♗e2
After 21.♗d3 ♖b4, losing the d4-pawn is fatal.
21...♗a4!
White is losing material and the game is basically finished here.



22.♖c1
22.♖d2 runs into 22...♖xc3! 23.bxc3 ♖b1+, and 22.b3 into 22...♗xb3!.
22...♖xb2 23.♔e1 ♔f8 24.h4 ♖b4 25.h5 gxh5 26.♗d3 ♖xd4 27.♔d2 ♗d7 28.♔e3 ♖xd5 29.♗xh7 ♖dc5 30.♔d2 f5 31.♗g6 ♗e8 32.♗xe8 ♔xe8 33.f4 ♔f7 34.g3 ♔f6 35.♔d3 ♔g6 36.♖c2 e6 37.♔d4 a5 38.a4 ♖5c6 39.♔d3 ♖d7+ 40.♔e3 ♖dc7 41.♔d3 ♖d6+
White resigned. I like games in which everything is so smooth and flawless ☺.

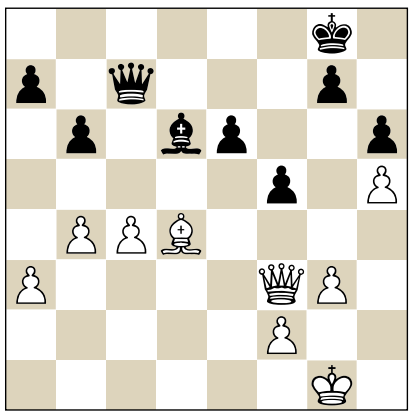
In the end we performed smoothly, even though Ivan and Sergey were in real trouble at some point and sat sweating with very red faces. But they stood firm and saved both games. In fact, it is this quality that really defines a good team player, in my opinion. We are all human and get bad positions (OK, unless we play the Grünfeld) and then it is a pleasure to sit next to someone who you know will hold on to his half point till the bitter end.

After Chicago we faced what we expected to be the toughest match, against Saratov, and we were right. My own game was pretty boring. I realized I didn't remember my preparation against the topical Meran-a6 Slav hybrid, so I decided to follow a safe recommendation I had read about in a Yearbook. I knew it was nothing, but since I didn't remember how and why and neither did my opponent, we both

'The trophy was bulky and beautiful, the team tired and happy.' In addition Ivan Sokolov, Anish Giri, Sergey Tiviakov and Jan Smeets cashed a total of $21,000.

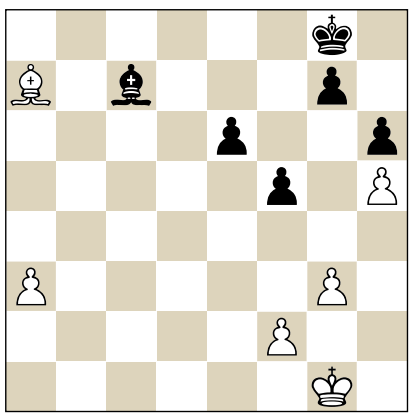
spent quite some time thinking about our choices. Eventually the game never left the frames of 'equal' and 'boring', so I could concentrate on watching my teammates. Jan suddenly started to lose control after missing a chance to get an attack that people normally sacrifice a piece for and lost his game.

On the other boards, Ivan managed to defend a dangerous position (really pulling it out of the fire with his teeth), and Sergey had a typical 50/50 bishop ending. While an embarrassed Smeets and me were trying to calculate the bishop ending to the end, Ivan was going around with his trademark hasty walk. Then we watched Sergey finish his game.



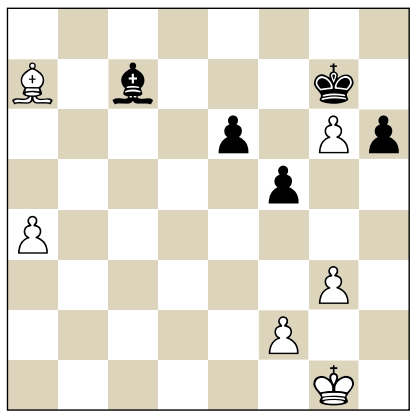
Tiviakov-Romanov
Al Ain World Cities 2012 (2)
position after 33...♕c7

34.c5!
So far Sergey had been pushing most of the game, even though at some point his initiative seemed to be vanishing. Here he found a nice way to transform his advantage into a very dangerous endgame.
34...bxc5 35.bxc5 ♗xc5 36.♕c3 ♗b6 37.♕xc7 ♗xc7 38.♗xa7

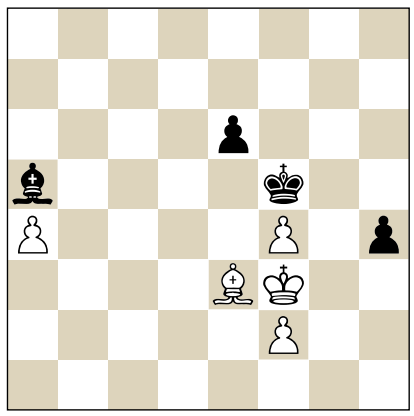


38...g6
Sergey suggested that Black should centralize his king, but I don't think this would have saved him, as the g7- and h6-pawns would be a pain in the neck.
38...♔f7 39.a4 e5 40.♗c5 ♗a5 41.♔f1 ♔e6 42.♔e2, and the white king is just coming, while the black one has to watch out for ♗f8.
39.hxg6 ♔g7 40.a4

40.♗e3 would avoid f4, but it does not seem to matter.

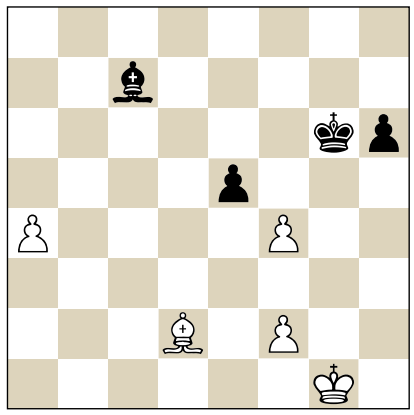


40...♔xg6 An interesting idea of Tomashevsky's was 40...f4!?, but it also seems to lose: 41.gxf4 ♔xg6 42.♔g2 ♔f5 43.♔f3 ♗a5 44.♗e3 h5 45.♔e2! (threatening ♗d2) 45...h4 (stopping ♗d2...) 46.♔f3!

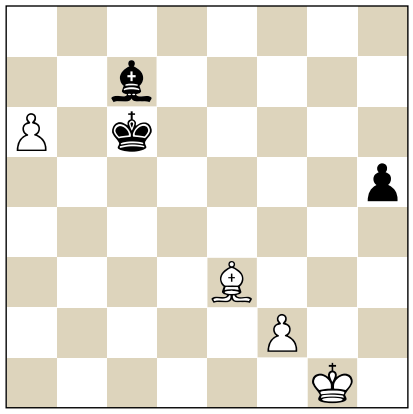


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

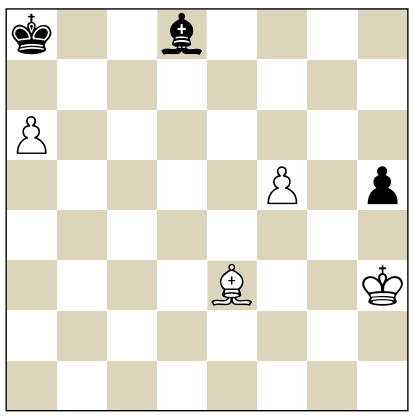
(with zugzwang! We missed this idea and thought that the position might be drawn) 46...e5 47.fxe5 ♔xe5 48.♔g4 ♔d5 49.f3 ♗c7 50.♔xh4 ♔c4.
41.♗e3 e5 42.♗d2 f4 43.gxf4



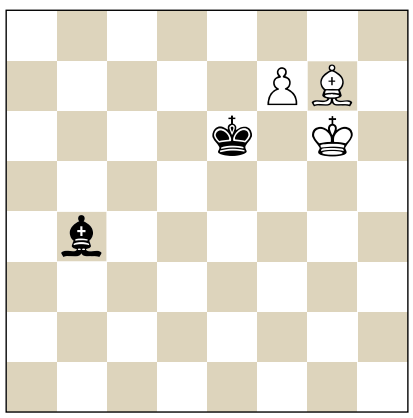
43...♔f5 43...exf4 44.♔g2 ♔f5 45.♔f3 boils down to the same thing.
44.fxe5 ♔xe5 45.a5 ♔d5 46.a6 ♔c6 47.♗e3 h5



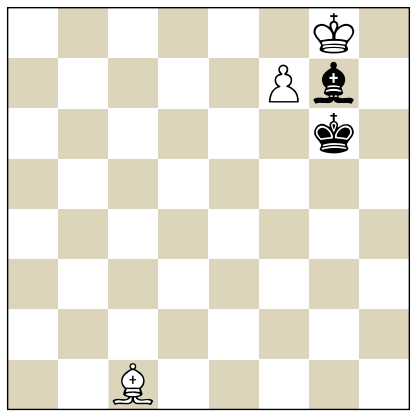
48.♔g2 Now Black either loses his h-pawn or must allow White to push his pawn to f5. Either way, he is not in time to save the game.
48...♗d8 49.f4 ♔c7 50.f5 ♔b8 51.♔h3 ♔a8



52.♗f2! The winning method is to give up the a-pawn and promote the f-pawn with the help of the king and the bishop. Smeets and I tried to remember his jewel against Fressinet when he lost a drawn bishop endgame, but as we realized later, White had the wrong pawn there, allowing Black to create a fortress.
52...♗f6 53.♗h4 ♗c3 54.♗g5 ♔a7 55.♔h4 ♔xa6 56.♔xh5 ♔b7 57.♔g6 ♔c6 58.♗h6 ♔d7 59.♗g7 ♗b4 60.f6 ♔e6 61.f7



Black's problem in this endgame is that the f8-h6 diagonal is too short. You will see what I mean.
61...♗d6 62.♗h6 ♗b4 63.♔g7 ♔f5 64.♔g8 ♔g6 65.♗f8 ♗c3 66.♗a3 ♗g7 67.♗c1



Black is in zugzwang and resigned, and we were through.

'I teach these endgames to kids', is what the winner said, following it up with a short bishop endgame masterclass, explaining us all the possible scenarios: if White had the e-pawn, if the kings were on the e-file, etc, etc.

Our semi-final opponents from Tashkent were relatively easy opponents, at least on paper. But with some luck we did score a convincing victory. My Sicilian finally yielded me a win and not a typical press-too-hard loss. My opponent, GM Dzhumaev, played interesting chess but collapsed in time-trouble.

In the final we were to meet the team from Baku. I was very optimistic about our chances, as Azeri players are not known for their stability. Yet I panicked when I saw that each of my moves was worse than my previous one and I had quite a similar feeling about the moves of Ivan, who somehow decided to add some fire to a boring position. When we were both fortunate to escape, Hoogeveen was left with two games, in both of which we were pushing a bit. When Ivan noticed that Sergey had finished his game, he called us to play the tie-break. On my way to the playing hall I was surprised to see Sergey giving an interview. That looked rather unprofessional considering that he might soon have to play the tie-break... unless... And that's when it hit me: Sergey's opponent had blundered, so we, the city of Hoogeveen, a town in the north of Holland known in the chess world for the annual Univé tournament, became the Cities World Champion of 2012!

The celebrations were short and sweet, the trophy was bulky and beautiful and our team was tired and happy. That very night we left for the airport. The only bitter moments were my personal goodbye to the swimming pool and the forgotten gifts from the gift shop in Dubai.

That's when I headed back to Europe to have some holidays... But that final stage of my trip is for the gossip magazines. And New In Chess is not one... or is it, Nigel? ■

Al Ain World Cities 2012

Preliminary + 4 rounds of knock-oout

Final	
Hoogeveen-Baku	2½-1½
Novi Sad-Tashkent	2-2

Semifinal	
Tashkent-Hoogeveen	1-3
Novi Sad-Baku	½-3½

Quarter Final	
Hoogeveen-Saratov	2-2
Tashkent-Athens	3-1
Baku-Wuxi	3-1
Novi Sad-Lund	2½-1½

Hoogeveen: Anish Giri, Ivan Sokolov, Sergey Tiviakov, Jan Smeets

Baku: Eltaj Safarli, Gadir Guseinov, Rauf Mamedov, Nidjat Mamedov, Vasif Durarbayli

Novi Sad: Ivan Ivanisevic, Robert Markus, Milos Perunovic, Nikola Sedlak, Dusan Popovic

Tashkent: Marat Dzhumaev, Andrey Kvon, Alexey Barsov, Saidali Iuldachev, Farkhad Sabirov

Who leads the deviation dance?

Luke McShane

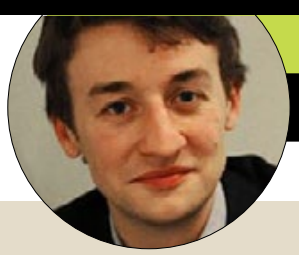
Joe Gallagher's book *Beating the Anti-Sicilians* (Batsford, 1994) is probably one of the more baffling titles a non-chess player might discover on my bookshelf. Who were the Anti-Sicilians, and what did they do to deserve that? My memory may not stretch back far enough to know better, but I believe it was also a genre-defining book in terms of chess publishing. Joe was a Najdorf specialist, but as any Najdorf devotee knows, a great number of games get derailed before there is any chance to nudge that a-pawn up the board. On the other hand, it makes little sense to seek out a separate guidebook for each fork in the road. The English have typically been in the vanguard of open-Sicilian-dodgers (witness the Grand-Prix Attack, involving an early f2-f4 and kingside attack, so-called in England for being a fearsome practical weapon on the weekend 'Grand-Prix' chess circuit), so Joe was well placed to write a book which many players found immensely useful.

The idea has been updated several times since. To mention a few, Rogozenko's *Anti-Sicilians: A Guide for Black* (Gambit, 2003), Palliser's *Fighting the Anti-Sicilians* (Everyman, 2007) and most recently, *Experts on the Anti-Sicilian* (Quality Chess, 2011) edited by Aagaard and Shaw, which is a collection of articles contributed by various players, covering most of the beasts you might encounter on your journey.

When I was filling out a repertoire for Black with 1...e5, I made good use of John Emms' book *Play the Open Games as Black* (Gambit, 2000), which has suggestions against White's many alternatives to the main-line Lopez. A more recent incarnation of the same concept was Marin's *Beating the Open Games* (Quality Chess 2nd edition 2008). A similar genre is constituted by the myriad of offbeat ways in which white players may steer the game away from the classical channels after 1.d4. Cox's *Dealing with d4 Deviations* (Everyman, 2005) is subtitled 'Fighting the Trompowsky, Torre, Blackmar-Diemer, Stonewall, Colle and Other Problem Openings', and Avrukh has returned to this theme in his latest book *Beating 1.d4 Sidelines* (Quality Chess, 2012).

It's worth considering why all of these sidelines are both popular and irritating. Black players often find them irritating because they would prefer to have the opportunity to play the main lines which they have studied harder. The main lines are sharper, and can appear to lead to richer games, because the theory extends further into the middlegame. The less critical lines are often less popular at the highest level, and therefore have a reputation for being inferior, which even leads some players to attach a moral stigma to those who choose them. It's an attitude which is mistaken and often counterproductive. Mistaken because countless strong players have shown that there is plenty of richness in these sidelines. Counterproductive because most of these lines are perfectly playable and many a black player has set out to 'punish' their opponent for playing 'wimpy' moves, and come unstuck as a result. One way to persuade yourself of this is simply to switch on your favourite engine at a very early stage. As I write this, in the position after 1.d4 d5, each of 2.♗f4 and 2.♘c3 occupy the top two choices. Similarly, I've never felt tempted to play the white side of the Blackmar-Diemer Gambit, but the naive computer assessment puts it on a par with the somewhat respectable Evans Gambit. Of course, this is no way to pick your openings, but it's not a bad way to brush off the dogma.

It's no accident that all the groups of sidelines mentioned above apply to White's opportunities to deviate from the main lines, rather than Black's. Steering the game toward one's preferred structures, even at the cost of forfeiting a theoretical 'edge', is a perfectly sensible way to use the first move advantage. If that has the added benefit of disappointing, discombobulating or exasperating the opponent, it's little wonder that it's a popular strategy. Furthermore, it's very much up for debate whether the main lines lead to richer positions. My view on that changes with the tides. Sometimes it feels as though the main lines are like a fertile jungle, replete with exotic treasures. On other occasions, those well-trodden paths seem to lead inexorably to barren clearings, and avoiding them



altogether seems like the only way to bring something new to the game. I'm sure many have experienced that odd contradiction.

I was curious to see how Boris Avrukh would tackle *Beating 1.d4 Sidelines*, as his previous Grandmaster Repertoire books for Quality Chess (The 1.d4 Repertoire volumes, and the Grünfeld) are quite analytically dense, while the best answer to sidelines can often depend more on pragmatism and matters of taste.

Indeed, Avrukh sets out a key point in his preface: 'It is a repertoire for Black against 1.d4 when White avoids the main lines that result after 2.c4. So far, so simple. There are two complicating factors – our choice against the minor lines will automatically be constrained by the main line we had hoped to reach, and I wish to cater for a variety of black defences. It would be easier to create a repertoire that, for example, starts 1...♘f6 and 2...e6, but of course that would have little relevance to those who intend to play the King's Indian. Instead I have created a range

Beating 1.d4 Sidelines
Grandmaster Repertoire 11
Boris Avrukh
Quality Chess, 2012

of black repertoires with the aim of making the book compatible with all the main defences to 1.d4. If you play the King's Indian, Grünfeld, Nimzo-Indian or meet 1.d4 with 1...d5 main lines, then the present book should cover virtually everything you need to know.'

This makes a good deal of sense, although it does mean that chunks of the book may be of little interest to readers with limited repertoires. Moreover, the effort to make this book compatible with a range of repertoires leads to some surprises. For example, after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.g3, Avrukh notes that 2...d5 may well transpose to the lines he recommends after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 d5 4.♗g2 b5!?, and that a Slav setup also has merit. But since those light-squared structures may not be to everyone's taste, he also offers a chapter on 2...c5.

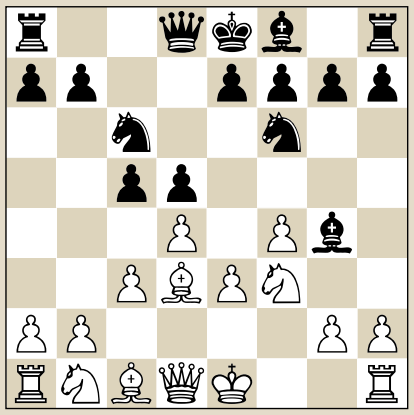
> 'The less critical lines have a reputation for being inferior, which even leads some players to attach a moral stigma to those who choose them.'

On the other hand, I did think that effort might have been better spent in providing more than one option against the Trompowsky (arguably the most testing of White's sidelines in this book). Avrukh recommends 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♗g5 ♘e4 3.♗f4 d5, only mentioning in passing that 3...c5 is also quite viable. Covering both moves would certainly have taken up a fair bit more space (that chapter runs to 27 pages), and playing 3...d5 often leads to structures quite different from those which arise after 1.d4 d5, but nevertheless I wondered how happy a dedicated King's Indian player would be with that suggestion.

It can be true that set-ups like the London System are played quite formulaically, particularly at lower levels, where inexperienced players use them as a sort of 'painting by numbers' approach to the opening. But more wily characters use offbeat lines to target a weak spot in the opponent's repertoire. For example, the 1.d4 ♘f6 2.g3 might well be played as an anti-King's Indian approach, as described above. Another example is the Barry Attack, beginning 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♘c3, where a player who refuses to place the d-pawn on d5 may get tricked into playing a Pirc. Consulting the recently released *ChessBase Mega Database* 2013, I was surprised to discover that although 3...d5 constitutes a majority of games there, 3...♗g7, a move which seems to me to be a small concession, has been played roughly 1/3 of the time.

For me, the corollary here is that the best antidote to many offbeat lines is in having a flexible repertoire, and not feeling constrained by the need to place your central pawns on a certain colour of square. That's easy for me to say, and I'm sure that many readers will be happy that Avrukh offers suggestions such as 2...c5 mentioned above. Nevertheless, I think it's good advice, and not trying to be formulaic in one's approach applies to the opening just as well as any other phase of the game.

The really feeble sidelines often give Black chances to claim advantage. I found a nice example of the kind of non-formulaic approach that Black needs to take:



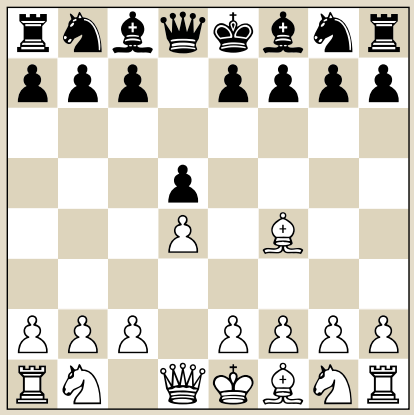
Avrukh p.16

6...e6 7.0-0 ♗d6

The reader may be aware that the main lines of the Stonewall Dutch against 1.d4 involve a kingside fianchetto from White. With that in mind, you

may ask why we are developing the bishop to d6 instead of g7. The simple answer is that d6 is a better square. The problem White has when playing against the Dutch is that Black will usually begin with the moves 1...f5, 2...♘f6 and 3...e6 and will wait for the move g2-g3 to appear on the board before committing himself to the Stonewall. But if a 1.d4 player knows in advance that his opponent will play the Stonewall regardless, he would do best to avoid the kingside fianchetto and instead go for something similar to the set-up recommended here, but with the bishop on the ideal f4-square instead of g5. (In the present variation Black does not have the luxury, although a bishop retreat to f5 will still work well for him in many lines.)

In general Avrukh strikes a good balance between making the best use of Black's resources, while also respecting the nuances in White's lines, such as the following position, where he recommends 2...♘f6.

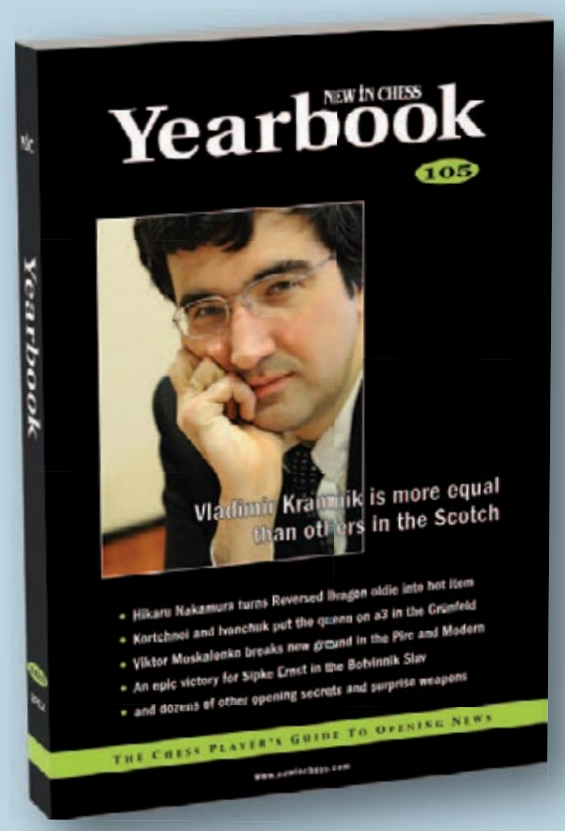


Avrukh p.97-8

2...♘f6

It is worth considering the equally playable 2...c5 in order to appreciate the advantage of the 2.♗f4 move order (compared with 2.♘f3 and 3.♗f4). One of the key positions arises after the natural sequence: 2...c5 3.e3 ♘c6 4.c3 ♕b6 5.♕b3 c4 6.♕c2 ♗f5? 7.♕xf5! ♕xb2 8.♕xd5 ♕xa1 (8...♕c1+ 9.♔e2 ♕b2+ 10.♘d2 ♕xa1 11.♕xc4 is no better) 9.♕b5. White has more than enough play for the exchange, and has made a heavy plus score from this position. Compared with variation A222 above (i.e. the same position as that after 6.♕c2 but with ♘f3/♘f6 included) the problem for Black was the lack of a knight on f6, which meant that White's queen could capture on d5 and hop over to b5. Thus in the above variation Black may as well play 4...♘f6, and after 5.♘d2 we arrive at the main line B22, beginning on page 106.

Avrukh's book will be a useful one for many players, but it is not a reference book. There is thorough coverage of many common and dangerous lines, but one should expect to face oddball sidelines that didn't make the cut. Then you'll be on your own, but that's why we play chess. ■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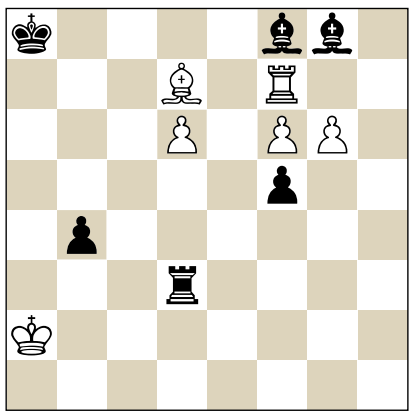
Jan Timman 60 Jubilee Tourney

The study tournament organized by New In Chess in honour of my 60th birthday was a great success, yielding 75 studies from 26 countries; not a record but surely a respectable number.

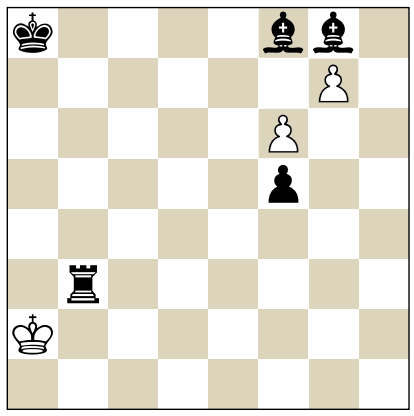
Naturally enough, a number of them had to be dropped after the first selection round, for example a study with a lot of pieces on the board but without any rhyme or reason otherwise. Four studies turned out to be incorrect.

A preliminary examination by Harold van der Heijden inevitably led to more studies having to be dropped, for example because some beautiful points in a number of them had been found before. In the end, I was left with 15 studies, and I did not find it difficult to determine the winner. One of the studies had such a brilliant conclusion that it put all the others in the shade. I did have the feeling that its composer – I was given the studies anonymously – was not very experienced. You notice these things in the introduction. The great composers usually manage to make something special out of those. But the most important thing for me was that the spectacular position after White's fifth move arises naturally.



Slumstrup Nielsen
White to play and draw
First prize

The white rook is pinned, which makes the first move forced.
1.♗e6 Not 1.♗c6+ ♔b8 2.♗d5 ♗xf7 3.♗xf7 in view of 3...♖g3, and Black wins. The king is stopping the d-pawn. **1...♗xd6** If Black takes the rook, an endgame with opposite-coloured bishops arises that White will hold easily: 1...♗xf7 2.♗xf7 ♗xd6 3.g7 ♖a3+ 4.♔b1 ♖g3 5.g8♕+ ♖xg8 6.♗xg8 f4 7.♗d5+, and the black pawns are kept under control. **2.g7 b3+ 3.♗xb3** White is forced to sacrifice his bishop, as 3.♔b1 ♗e5 would lead his king into a mating net. **3...♖xb3** Now it's starting to get interesting. White cannot take the rook and therefore has to check the black king. **4.♖f8+ ♗xf8** What now, though? After 5.gxf8♕+ ♖b8+ everything will have been for nothing.

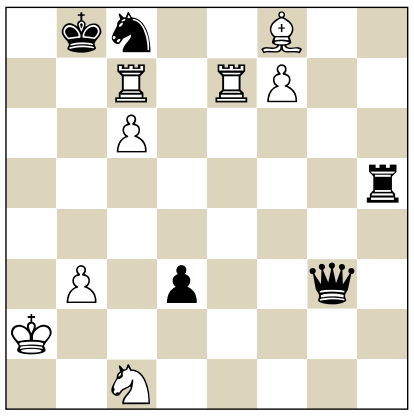


5.f7!! A brilliant finesse. Black cannot take either pawn with a bishop, which means he will have to go for rook checks. **5...♖a3+ 6.♔b1 ♖a1+ 7.♔c2 ♖c1+ 8.♔d3!** The white king always has a square. It must stay out of the reach of the black bishop pair. **8...♖c3+ 9.♔e2** Not 9.♔d2 in view of 9...♖c8! 10.fxg8♕ ♗b4+, and wins. **9...♖c2+ 10.♔f1!** The king could not go to the d-file; after both 10.♔d1 and 10.♔d3 Black would win with 10...♖d2+. **10...♖c1+ 11.♔e2** Not 11.♔g2 in view of 11...♖g1+, and wins. **11...♖e1+ 12.♔d3** And again the king cannot go to the kingside. After 12.♔f3 ♖f1+ 13.♔e2 ♖f2+ 14.♔d1 ♖d2+ 15.♔e1 ♖d8! Black would win. **12...♖e3+ 13.♔c2** Again the only square for the king to stay out of the reach of the bishop pair. **13...♖e2+ 14.♔b1 ♖b2+ 15.♔a1!** The corner is safe. **15...♖a2+ 16.♔b1 ♖a1+ 17.♔c2** And the king has completed its circuit. Draw.

The competition in honour of my 50th birthday was won by GM Stefan Kindermann, a novice in the area of studies. Steffen Slumstrup Nielsen has a rating of 2180. There are no studies by him in Van der Heijden's database, yet this is not his debut. He participated twice in recent study competitions.

It does seem to be a good idea to be called Stefan or Steffen if you want to do well in my study competitions.

Second prize goes to a study with a main line that is exactly the same length. It is a sacrifice-fest rounded off by knight promotions on both sides.

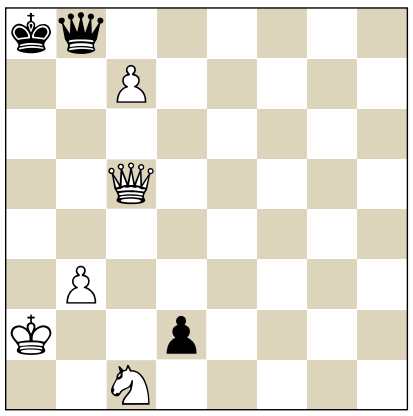


Afek
White to play and win
Second prize

White is going to sacrifice a rook in order to drive the black king into a

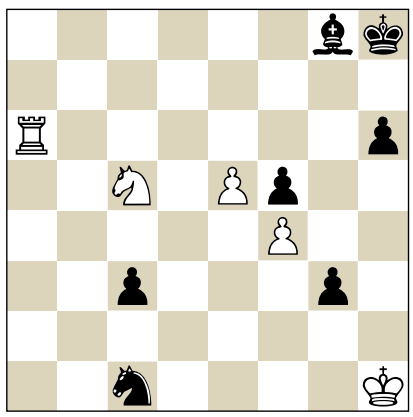
37-year-old Steffen Slumstrup Nielsen from Denmark was the surprise winner of the Jan Timman 60 Jubilee Tourney.

mating net. **1.♖b7+ ♔a8 2.♖a7+!** Black has no choice but to accept the rook offer. **2...♘xa7 3.♖e8+ ♘c8** A forced counter-sacrifice. **4.♖xc8+ ♔a7 5.♗c5+!** A bishop sac to vacate the queening square for the f-pawn. **5...♖xc5 6.♖a8+!** The second rook sac. Insufficient for the win was 6. f8♕ in view of 6...♕g2+ 7.♔a3 ♖a5+ 8.♔b4 ♕d2+ 9.♔c4 ♕xc1+, with perpetual check. **6...♔xa8 7.f8♕+ ♕b8 8.♕xc5 d2** White has come far, but Black still has counterplay. **9. c7** Certainly not 9.♕a5+? in view of 9...♕a7, and Black wins.



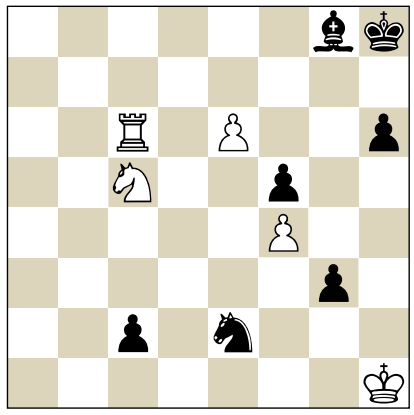
9...dxc1♘+! A surprising minor promotion introducing the Phoenix theme: the knight Black had sacrificed on move 3 rises from its ashes. **10.♔b1!** White could not capture the knight: after 10.♕xc1 Black saves himself with 10...♕xc7. **10...♕c8 11.♕c6+** An intermediate check to remove the stalemate. **11...♔a7 12.♔xc1 ♕h3!** A final attempt that certainly is not without venom. **13. c8♘+!** This promotion also shows the Phoenix theme. The white c1-knight is reborn on c8. **13...♔b8 14.♘b6 ♕xb3 15.♕c8+ ♔a7 16.♕a8+ ♔xb6 17.♕b8+** And White wins.

Some time ago a question circulated in chess circles whether there was a position that was drawn despite the opponent having three pawns against a bare king and having to move as well. Another important stipulation was that there could be no doubled pawns on the board. When I was asked this question, I had to think for a few minutes before finding the correct answer. This answer can be found in the following study.



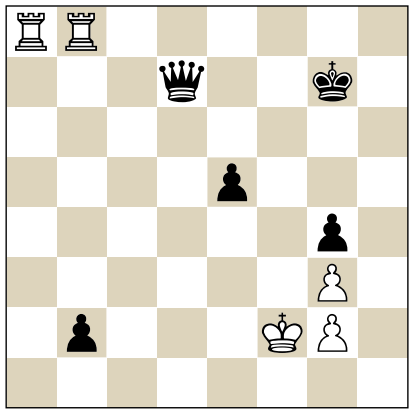
Didukh/Pervakov/Sumbatyan
White to play and draw
Third prize

A co-production by three endgame study heavyweights. White needs to try and stop the dangerous black passed pawns. **1.e6!** With as its main aim to restrict the black bishop's sphere of action. **1...c2 2.♖c6** White puts his rook on the c-file in order to stop the c-pawn. Later he will select a square for the knight. **2...♘e2**



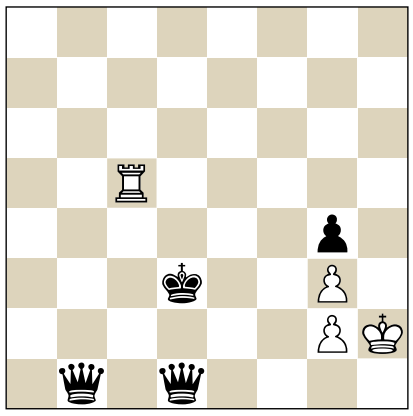
3.♘e4!! Quite beautiful. White offers his knight in order to keep the long h1-a8 diagonal closed for another while. The obvious 3.♘d3 would be insufficient in view of 3...♗xe6 (threatening mate) 4.♖xe6 c1♕+ 5. ♘xc1 g2+ 6.♔xg2 ♘xf4+, and Black has reached a winning endgame. **3... c1♕+ 4.♖xc1 ♗xe6 5.♖c2** The 'thematic try' was 5.♖e1, after which Black gets the better of the game with 5...fxe4 6.♖xe2 (6.f5 ♗c4!) 6...♗g4 7.♖g2 ♗f3 8.♔g1 ♗xg2 9.♔xg2 ♔g7 10.♔xg3 ♔f6! and now White doesn't avail of 11.♔f4, as explained later on in the main line. If 11.♔g4 then 11... h5+. **5...fxe4 6.f5!!** An amazing pawn sacrifice whose point will become clear only after seven moves. **6...♗xf5 7.♖xe2 ♗g4** Black's best try. After 7...h5 8.♔g2 h4 9.♖e1 ♔g7 10.♖h1 e3 11.♖e1 White will win the e-pawn and easily hold the draw. **8. ♖g2!** Liquidating to the improbable pawn ending I referred to above. **8...♗f3 9.♔g1 ♗xg2 10.♔xg2** Black cannot prevent losing both his g-pawn and his e-pawn. **10...♔g7 11.♔xg3 ♔g6 12.♔g4!** Mutual zugzwang. Now it also becomes clear why White had to sacrifice the f-pawn: square f4 has become available to the king. Insufficient was 12.♔f4 in view of 12...♔h5!, and the king is kept away. **12...h5+ 13.♔f4** Draw.

Jan Timman

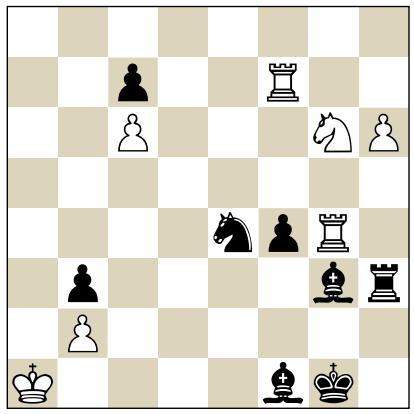


Salai
White to play and draw
Fourth prize

It is clear that the rooks will be unable to stop the black b-pawn. Nor does he have perpetual check. White will have to go for stalemate. **1.♔g1!** On its way to h2, where the king will be able to take cover. **1...♕d1+ 2.♔h2 b1♕** Black has two queens. White will have to sacrifice both his rooks. But how will he manage this? **3.♖g8+** Not with 3.♖a7+ in view of 3...♔g6 4.♖g7+ ♔f5! 5.♖g5+ ♔xg5 6.♖g8+ ♔f5 7.♖g5+ ♔e4 8.♖xe5+ ♔d3 9.♖e1 ♔d2 10.♖e2+ ♔c1, and the stalemate is gone. This variation is typical for White's problem trying to get rid of both rooks. **3...♔f6 4.♖af8+ ♔e6 5.♖e8+ ♔d6 6.♖e6+** White insists. Black has no option; he has to capture the first rook. **6...♔xe6 7.♖e8+ ♔d7 8.♖e7+ ♔c6 9.♖e6+ ♔d5 10.♖xe5+ ♔c4!** After 10...♔d4 11.♖d5+ White would find it easier to reach the draw. **11.♖c5+ ♔d3** The king wants to escape to e1, after which the stalemate would be gone.

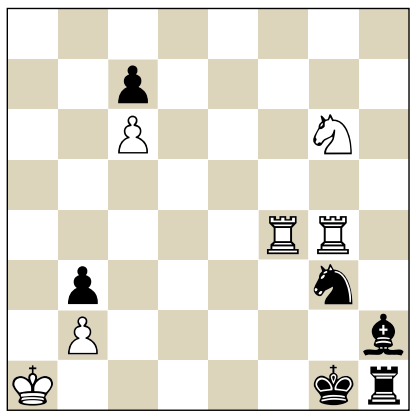


12.♖c1!! This is the only way White can continue to aim for stalemate, exploiting the fact that the black king blocks the b1-h7 diagonal for the newly promoted queen. **12...♕b5** Black has to give one queen. **13.♖xd1+ ♔e2 14.♖d8!** The only rook move. Now White can build a fortress. **14...♕h5+ 15.♔g1 ♕c5+ 16.♔h2 ♔f2 17.♖d2+ ♔f1 18.♖d1+ ♔e2 19.♖d8** Draw. Although this study really only has one theme (stalemate), it was constructed quite ingeniously constructed.



Jasik
White to play and draw
Fifth prize

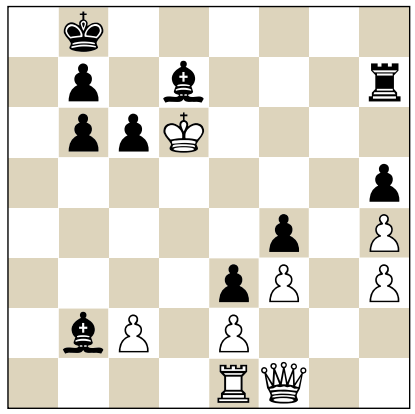
Some studies have an element of humour in them. In this study, Black tries to mate on the back rank, and White has to pull out all the stops to prevent this. In the end he prevents the mate by suddenly stalemating his opponent. **1.h7 ♖h1** Black can also try to open fire on the enemy king from the other side with 1...♖h5. Black is threatening 2...♖a5+ 3.♔b1 ♗d3+ and mate. With 2.♖d7 White will just manage to preserve the balance. **2.h8♕ ♗h3 3.♕xh3 ♖xh3 4.♖fxf4 ♖h1** The rook has returned to the back rank, and White will have to find new resources. **5.♖h4 ♗h2 6.♖hg4+ ♘g3**



Black has allowed his rook and bishop to be hemmed in in order to keep his mating chances alive. But now he gets a surprise. **7.♘h4!** Stalemate!

I gave a special prize to a study in which two themes from problem chess are combined: the 'Bristol theme' and the 'Indian theme'.

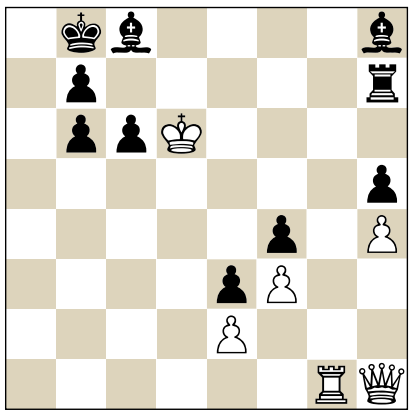
First some explanation. The Bristol theme arises when a piece is played along a file or a diagonal in such a way that a square is vacated for another piece going into the same direction. The Indian theme arises when a bishop on a diagonal is played to a square past a square that is subsequently occupied by a rook. By the interference on the diagonal the enemy king is given squares to go to, so that stalemate situations are eliminated.



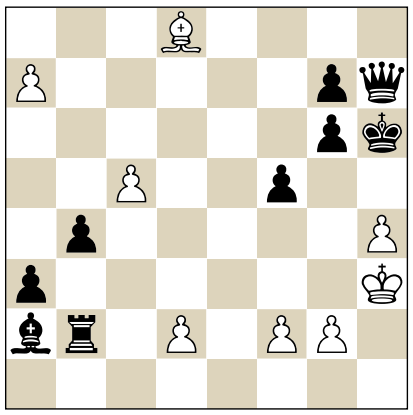
Bruch/Minski
White to play and draw
Special prize

Materially speaking, White is better, but his king is deep in enemy territory and in great danger. **1.c3** White sacrifices his c-pawn in order to go for stalemate. **1...♗xc3 2.♖c1** The thematic try was 2.♖a1 in order to try and sacrifice rook and queen as quickly as possible. But then Black will win with 2...♗f5 3.♖a8+ ♔xa8 4.♕a1+ ♗a5!, and the stalemate has gone from the position. This is why White first forces the bishop to a less good square. **2...♗h8!** In order to take the rook to g7. **3.♖a1** Threatening to sacrifice both pieces on the a-file. **3...♖g7** The Indian theme. **4.♕h1!!** The lead-up to the Bristol theme. White entrenches his queen in the corner in order to be immune to future discovered checks. **4...♗c8** After 4...♗f5 White

could have played 5.♔e5. **5.♖g1!** The point of the previous move. **5...♖d7+ 6.♔e6** Black no longer has effective discovered checks. **6...♖h7+ 7.♔d6**

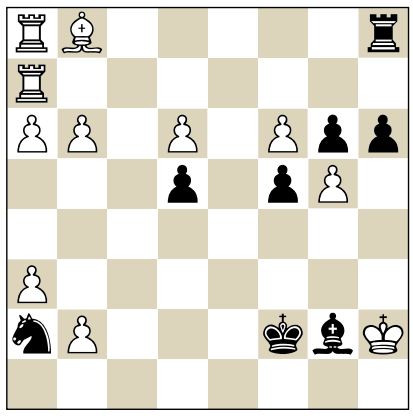


7...♗f6 Threatening 8...♖e7 and 9...♖e6 mate. 7...♗c3 8.♖g8 ♖d7+ 9.♔e6 ♖d8+ 10.♔f7=, e.g. 10...♗e6+ 11.♔xe6 ♖xg8 12.♕b1; 7...♖h6+ 8.♔e7 ♗f6+ 9.♔f7=; not 9.♔f8? ♗e6 10.♖g8 ♖h7−+. **8.♖g8!** The only way out. 8.♖g6? ♖d7+ 9.♔e6 ♖d1+ 10.♔xf6 ♖xh1−+. **8...♖e7 9.♖xc8+!** ♔**xc8** Threatening 10...♔d8/♖e8 and 11...♗e5 mate. **10.♕b1!** ♔**d8** 10...♖e8?? 11.♕f5+ (11.♕xb6? ♗e7+ 12.♔e6 ♗c5+−+) 11...♔b8 12.♕xf6+−. **11.♕xb6+** Draw. 11.♕f5? ♗e5+−+.



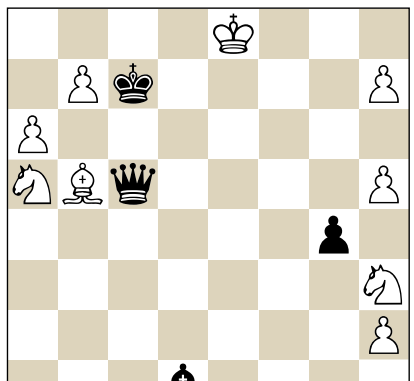
Hlinka/Kekely
White to play and draw
First honourable mention

Before queening the pawn, White first drives the black king into a corner. **1.♗g5+ ♔h5 2.a8♕ ♖b3+ 3.f3 ♕g8!** The black queen is deployed. After 4.♕e4 Black now wins with 4...♕e6!. After 5.♕f4 ♕c4! 6.d4 ♕f1! White is finished. **4.d3!** This intermediate move is White's salvation. **4...♖xd3 5.♕e4!** Now the queen sac is correct, as 5...♕e6 will be met simply by 6.♕xd3. **5...♕c4 6.♕e8 ♕g8 7.♕e4 ♕c4 8.♕e8 ♖xf3+** Black tries to make progress with a rook sacrifice. **9.gxf3 ♕g8 10.♕e2 ♕c4 11.♕e8 ♕g8 12.♕e2 ♕e6 13.♕g2 ♕c4 14.c6!** With this pawn sacrifice White secures the draw. Play could continue as follows: 14...♗b1 15.c7 ♗d3 16.c8♕ ♕xc8 17.f4 ♗f1 18.♕xf1 ♕c3+ 19.♔g2, and neither player can do anything. A study made elegant by the dance of the queens.



Hornecker
White to play and win
Second honourable mention

The second win study! The position is a bit chaotic, but there is a clear mating threat that leaves White no choice. **1.♗c7 ♖h7** Not 1...hxg5+ at once in view of 2.♖xh8 g4 3.d7, and wins, which is why Black postpones capturing on g5 till the bishop is less well positioned. **2.♗d8 ♖h8 3.♗e7 ♖h7 4.♗f8 hxg5+ 5.♖xh7 g4** The situation is extremely dangerous for White. He will have to sacrifice both rooks to prevent mate. **6.♖h3!** The first rook sac. But Black refuses it. **6...f4 7.♖f3+!** Now he is forced to accept it. **7...♗xf3 8.♖e8** White has some breathing space, but he must continue to play accurately. After 8.♖c8? ♗e4 9.d7 g5! his king would be caught in a mating net after all: 10.d8♕ g3+ 11.♔h3 ♗f5 mate. **8...♗g2 9.♖e2+!** The second rook is sacrificed as well. **9...♔xe2 10.♗h6!** An important little move. After 10.♔xg2 f3+ 11.♔g3 f2 Black would have a perpetual check mechanism after queening. **10...g5** His best chance. **11.♔xg2** Now he can. The white king has an escape route on the kingside after Black queens his pawn. **11...f3+ 12.♔g3** And White wins. A possible continuation is 12...f2 13.a7 f1♕ 14.♔xg4 ♕f3+ 15.♔xg5 ♕g2+ 16.♔h5 d4 17.f7, and the white passed pawns will eventually decide. A spectacular study, but with a less-than-satisfactory finish. This, coupled with the fact that the black knight on a2 does not participate, has stood in the way of a higher ranking.

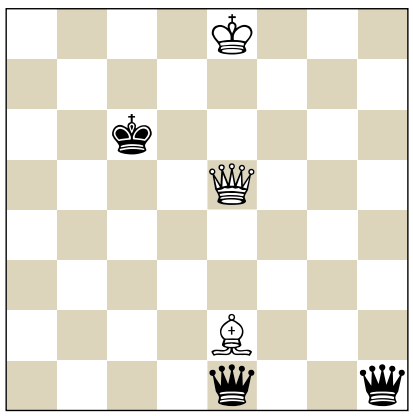


Krug
Black to play, White to draw
Third honourable mention

A slightly confusing starting position. Black can capture the white bishop with check, but then the white king escapes to the kingside.
1...g3! When I showed the study to Erwin l'Ami, he immediately indicated this advance. Black is not only threatening mate, but he will also create a very dangerous passed pawn, since White will be unable to prevent the capture on h2. After 1...gxh3 2.b8♕+ ♔xb8 3.a7+ ♔xa7 4.♘c6+, followed by 5.h8♕, White would have drawn fairly easily. **2.b8♕+** Now, too, White should first sacrifice his passed pawns on the queenside. **2...♔xb8 3.a7+ ♔xa7 4.♘c6+ ♔b6 5.h8♕** And finally, now that Black no longer has any direct threats, it is time to queen. **5...gxh2** And Black is going to get a second queen in his turn. **6.♘f2!** White sacrifices the knight to force the black queen to a worse

Jan Timman

square. **6...♕xf2 7.♕e5** Centralization. The threat is a check on b8. **7...♗xh5+** This bishop sac has the same function as White's knight sac. The white queen will have to leave its central post. **8.♕xh5 ♕e1+ 9.♗e2 h1♕ 10.♕b5+ ♔c7 11.♕b8+!** The purpose of this check is to shed a tempo. After 11.♕e5+ ♔xc6 12.♕e6+ ♔c5 13.♕e7+ ♔d4 White would lose. **11...♔xc6 12.♕e5**

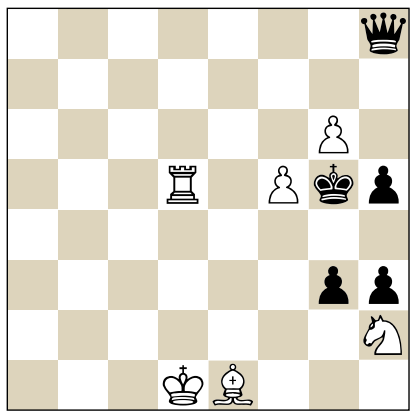


This is one of those amazing situations of mutual zugzwang with queens on the board. Every black queen move unavoidably leads to the loss of material. **12...♕d5 13.♗b5+** Draw. A solid, complicated study.

Kovalenko
White to play and win
Fourth honourable mention

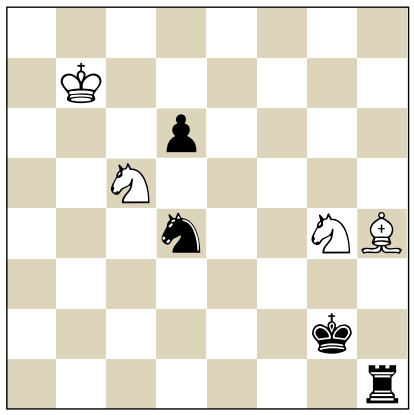
A nice piece of work from 65-year-old Vitaly Kovalenko. White starts by winning the queen. **1.♕h4+ ♔g6 2.♘e7+ ♕xe7 3.fxe7 ♗a6+ 4.♔f2 ♗b6+** It is becoming clear that Black's counterplay is not to be underestimated. The white king has to jump through all kinds of hoops to escape perpetual chess. **5.♔g3 ♗c7+ 6.♔h3** For the moment, the king has found relatively safe shelter. But it will soon have to give up its queen. **6...♗c8+ 7.g4 ♘g5+ 8.♕xg5+ ♔xg5 9.♗e3+** Before queening the e-pawn, White must first prevent the mate. **9...♗f4 10.♗xf4+ ♔xf4 11.e8♕ ♗xg4+ 12.♔h4 a1♕** Both players have a new queen. Now the black king turns out to be less safe than its white counterpart after all. **13.♕f7+ ♗f5 14.♕c7+ ♕e5 15.♕c1+ e3 16.♕c4+ ♕e4 17.♘d3** Mate.

This mate, with self-blocks by the black king, has been seen before.



Kasparian 1986
White to play and win

The black king will be floored as follows: **1.♗d2+ ♔h4 2.g7 ♕xg7 3.f6 ♕xf6 4.♗g5+!** The main aim of this move is to get square d4 for the rook. **4...♕xg5 5.♖d4+ ♕g4+ 6.♘f3** Mate. By having the white queen make a circuit, Kovalenko has embellished the mating motif.



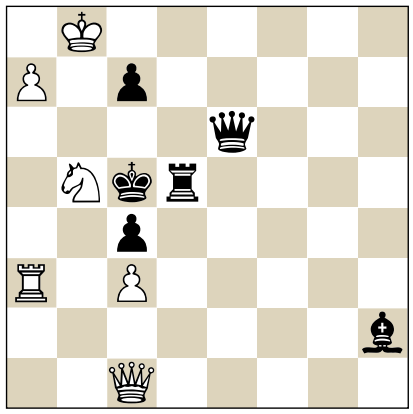
Bazlov
White to play and draw
Fifth honourable mention

Two white pieces are under attack. White will have to try to capture the black pawn. **1.♘e6!** Mainly meant to make square c6 available to the king. **1...♘xe6 2.♗e7!!** A fantastic piece sacrifice. White is aiming for a position a rook down that, surprisingly, leads to a draw. **2...♖h7 3.♔c6** and now:

A) 3...♖xe7 4.♔xd6 ♖g7 5.♘e3+! On its way to f5, after which the perpetual attack on the rook starts. **5...♔f2 6.♘f5 ♖g6 7.♘e7 ♖f6 8.♔e5 ♖h6 9.♘f5** With a perpetual attack on the rook.

B) 3...♘d4+ is not sufficient either. In the following variation you see an echo of line A: **4.♔xd6 ♘f5+ 5.♔e6 ♘xe7 6.♘f6 ♖g7 7.♘e8**, again with a perpetual attack on the rook.

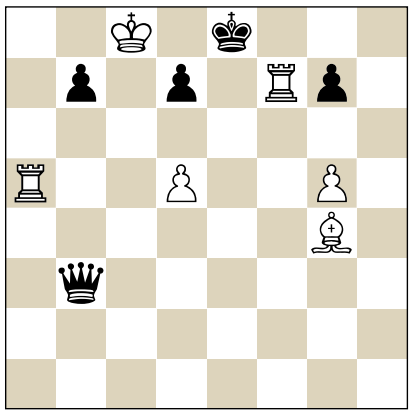
A compact study in which all pieces play. Bazlov had tried to work out this idea of a positional draw earlier, but his original version was incorrect. Publishing such an incorrect version has an annoying drawback: when you correct it, it turns out to contain an anticipation.



Amann
White to play and draw
First commendation

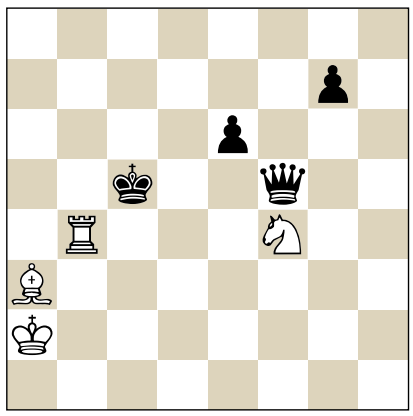
The white king is deep in enemy territory. White must be careful not to run into a quick mate. **1.a8♘!** Covering square b6. **1...♖d8+ 2.♔a7 ♖xa8+ 3.♔xa8 ♔b6** Tightening the mating net around the white king. It is clear that White should start going for stalemate. **4.♖a6+** The first sacrifice. **4...♔xa6 5.♘xc7+** And the second one. **5...♗xc7 6.♕h6** The queen is sacrificed as well. But this offer Black doesn't have to ac-

cept. **6...♕b6 7.♕d6!** White insists. **7...♗d8** And Black stubbornly refuses to take the queen. **8.♕c7!** And White continues to press. **8...♔b5 9.♕xc4+** The last sacrifice. **9...♔xc4** Stalemate. The queen offers are nice, but the stalemate motif is in no way surprising.



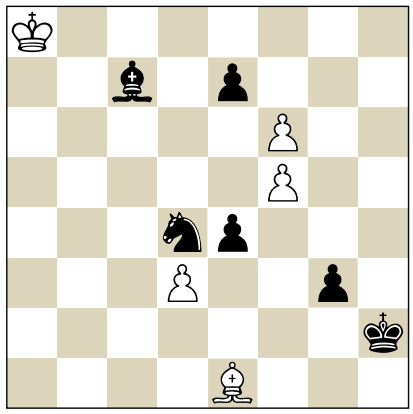
Amann
White to play and win
Second commendation

The second study by the Austrian composer. Both white rooks are under attack – directly or indirectly. It is clear that White must keep the most active one. **1.♖f5!** The obvious move was 1.♗h5, but after 1...♕c3+ 2.♔b8 ♕xa5 3.d6 g6! 4.♗xg6 ♕d8+ 5.♔xb7 ♕c8+! White would be unable to win. **1...♕c3+ 2.♔b8 ♕xa5 3.d6 ♕d8+ 4.♔a7!** An important tempo move. **4...g6 5.♗h5!** Now it's possible. **5...gxh5 6.♔xb7** Mutual zugzwang. Black has to block his queen with his h-pawn. **6...h4 7.g6 h3 8.g7** And White wins. There is a Halski study from 1979 with the same idea, but I won't give it here, because Amann's study is better. The theme of White having to make tempo moves with the king in order to get the black queen to block itself with a pawn has been worked out very well by Bron.



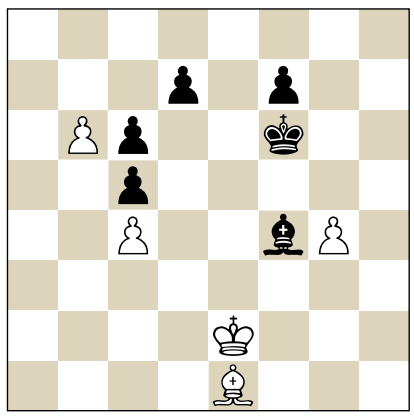
Bron 1947
White to play and win

White does not have any good discovered checks, and the black king is threatening to escape via c6.
1.♘g6! Introducing a family check on e7 into the position. **2...♕d5+ 2.♔a1** Intending to meet 2...♕d1+ with 3.♖b1+. **2...e5!** Vacating square e6 for the queen. **3.♘e7 ♕e6** The black queen is safe for the moment. **4. ♔b1!** The game of tempos with the king is starting. **4...g6 5. ♔a1!!** The king won't move up the board before the black pawn has gone to g5. **5...g5 6.♔b2 g4 7.♔c3!** The black g-pawn is blocking the queen's route to h3. **7...♕a2 8.♖b3+** And White wins.



Samilo/Tarasiuk
White to play and win
Third commendation

The story of the queening of two passed pawns. **1.f7 g2 2.♗f2 e3** Black gives a pawn to gain a tempo with his knight. **3.♗xe3 ♘xf5 4.♗a7!** The only good square for the bishop. After 4.♗f2 ♗g3 5.♗a7 e5 6.f8♕ ♘d4! White will be unable to win. **4...♘d4!** This time a knight sacrifice for a tempo. **5.♗xd4 e5 6.♗c5 ♗d6 7.♗xd6 g1♕ 8.♗xe5+ ♔h1 9.f8♕ ♕g8** This was the idea. Stalemate motifs are beginning to make themselves felt. **10.♕b8 ♕a2+ 11.♕a7 ♕g8+ 12.♗b8 ♕d5+ 13.♕b7** And White wins. The conclusion (with a rook on g8 instead of a queen) is known from a study by Szentmartoni from 1954.



Keith/Minski
White to play and win
Fourth commendation

An elegant study without any real surprises. **1.♔f3 ♗b8** Hiding the bishop in the hinterland. **2.♗g3 d6 3.♔f4 ♔g6 4.♗h4** On its way to c7. **4...d5+ 5.♔f3 dxc4 6.♗d8 c3 7.♔e2!** With an outflanking movement the foremost c-pawn is stopped. **7...♗g3** Or 7...♗e5 8.♔d1! (8.♔d3? c4+! 9.♔c2 ♗d4 10.b7 ♗e5!=; 8.♗c7?= c2 9.♔d2 ♗c3+ 10.♔xc2 ♗a5=) 8...c4 9.♗c7 ♗d4 10.b7 ♗a7 11.♗f4! f5 12.g5. **8.♔d1** 8.♔d3? ♗f2! 9.b7 (9.♔xc3 f5 10.gxf5+ ♔xf5 11.♔c4 ♔e6=) 9...♗g3 10.♔xc3 f5 11.gxf5+ ♔xf5=; 8.♗c7? c2 9.♔d2 ♗e1+! 10.♔xc2 ♗a5=. **8...c4 9.♗c7 ♗f2 10.b7 ♗a7 11.♗f4!** The completion of the bishop manoeuvre. Black has been played out of position. **11...f5 12. g5** And White wins. ■

This is the provisional award. Claims concerning incorrect studies and other queries can be sent to tourney director René Olthof at raja@newinchess.com until May 1, 2013. After that the award will be final.

Jan Timman
Arnhem 14-12-2012

Hans Ree

Measuring body and mind

It has been suggested that the blood, sweat and tears of the participants in the World Championship cycle might be scientifically monitored and streamed on the Internet. Hans Ree imagines a future of chess as a biometric carnival.

Of course the chess Oscar for 2012 will go to Magnus Carlsen, as it has in the three previous years, but I think the Internet player from Lörrach deserves a nomination in the category 'best supporting comic actor'.

The story did not reach the pages of our serious magazine, but it was reported by mainstream media in several countries. On the afternoon of Monday July 2 last year residents of the German town of Lörrach were alarmed by cries from a neighbouring house: 'You won't get out of this!' they heard a voice shouting repeatedly.

Was someone kept prisoner there? Instead of inquiring directly if this was the case, as good neighbourship would demand, the alarmed neighbours phoned the police. A patrol went out to find the apartment and was greeted by a 60-year-old man, who was quite surprised to be visited by the police and explained that far from holding a prisoner, he was involved in an online chess game and had vented his strong emotions.

The police officers made him promise to be quieter in the future, and apparently that was it. In their place I might have opened a few cupboards, just to make sure.

The website *ChessVibes* then asked its users to report how they handled their emotions while playing online chess, but the response was a bit disappointing. The respondents were eager enough to give their opinion on the behaviour of the man from Lörrach, but did not disclose their own.

Repressed emotions

The story appeals to me, because on the one hand the behaviour of this man was absurd and comical, while on the other hand it is easy to identify with him. There, but for the grace of emotional repression, go I. In a way his behaviour was natural and it may well have been beneficial to his health.

Most players would not act that way, although they might have when they were kids. Obviously in over-the-board play it would be outrageous, but apart from sanctions, the rules of civilized behaviour have been so well internalized that it would violate a real taboo to express one's pleasure at one's opponent's misery.

Ulf Andersson would walk around beaming and rubbing his hands with pleasure while saying: 'He can do nothing. Absolutely nothing.' No matter that Ulf himself wasn't able to do much either. The spectacle of the helpless opponent sufficed.

Because Ulf was the gentlest and most innocent of people in real life, one didn't hold his obvious sadism at the board against him. He was an exception, as Fischer was with his 'I like to see them squirm'. Surely Fischer wasn't exceptional in experiencing this sadist emotion, but most of us keep it to ourselves. We are civilized, but as we have learned from the Viennese quack, civilization brings discontent in its wake.

Boris Spassky has contrasted the unhealthy emotions of chess with the healthy emotions of tennis. It is obvious what makes the difference: physical activity.

During a chess game hormones flow, the heartbeat accelerates, the blood pressure rises. In normal life these processes prepare the body for physical activity, such as fleeing from danger, but not in chess. In chess, the body functions are raging for activity; running, fighting, whatever. But nothing happens; the player sits still.

A self-destructive machine

The body of the chess player resembles the wonderful sculptural machines by the Swiss artist Jean Tinguely. All components of these machines display frantic activity, but nothing is actually produced, it's all empty movement. The comparison becomes a bit dark when you realize that one of his most famous machines, 'Homage to New York', was meant to self-destruct,

though at its first showing at the Museum of Modern Art in 1960 it didn't quite accomplish this, because a nervous fireman intervened halfway.

Should the chess player be considered a self-destructive machine in the spirit of Tinguely? Maybe.

There is a long list of chess players who died of a stroke or a heart attack during or just after an exciting game. You might call it coincidence. Everybody dies; it has to happen somewhere, so why not at the board? But I think that there have been too many such deaths at the board to be passed off as mere coincidence.

In 1994 a news story circulated about a Russian chess master, Nikolai Titov, whose head had exploded, with brains spilling all over the place, just by the strain of deep thinking. Of course it was a joke, like stories about sightings of Elvis or an alien abduction of Kirsan. It was a silly story with a grain of symbolic truth.

I shouldn't be carried away too much by these metaphors of self-destructive machines and exploding heads. After all, most of us do not die that way.

In 2007, the Australian GM Ian Rogers ended his career as an active player on his doctor's advice. He is still very active in the chess world, of course, but mainly as a writer, and writers' heads do not explode.

Rogers had kidney problems, and his physician had told him that with the stress involved with tournament chess he would either have to have a kidney transplant, or die.

This was the official story, but in private Rogers added a nasty twist to it. He had a medicine prescribed which worked well, but was on FIDE's doping list. There was a substitute medicine which was not on that list and was supposed to be as effective as the medicine that Rogers was forced to give up. But it wasn't.

So actually it was FIDE with its silly doping rules that forced the choice on Rogers: either die early or give up competitive chess.

Keepers of the Holy Grail

The American entrepreneur Andrew Paulson, who bought the rights to the World Championship cycle from FIDE, is fortunately not one of those reformers who think that chess players have to be re-educated. In fact, last year at the London Grand Prix tournament he said to *The Guardian* (as quoted in New In Chess 2012/5): 'When I first dove into the chess world I felt incredibly comfortable with these people. It was like being back in college. These were passionate, eccentric, but deeply committed people. They see themselves as keepers of the Holy Grail.'

Good. That's the way I like to see them too. So the players are OK, but their world in Paulson's view certainly needs re-branding. One innovation, which he revealed on BBC radio, was a sort of cockpit where the players will be surrounded by the audience: 'There'll be no escape and we'll watch the beads of sweat crawl down their foreheads.'

'Sweat, pulse, blood pressure, skin resistivity. Lady Gaga has proclaimed the Body Revolution 2013 and Paulson's chessworld may follow suit.'

An even more striking innovation was divulged by Paulson on CNN: 'We have assured that the players are happy with the idea of being mounted with non-obtrusive biometric measurement tools. We'll be taking their pulse, their blood pressure and their skin resistivity – how much they sweat.' All these data will be streamed over the Internet.

At the opening ceremony of the London Grand Prix leg, Paulson mentioned a final requirement of FIDE for the privilege of organizing a FIDE tournament: playing the FIDE hymn. Then he had it played on an old-fashioned tape recorder, with a cassette tape. A blast from the past with a clear message. Roll over, FIDE, you're so 20th century!

I couldn't understand the purpose of this contemptuous handling of a FIDE tradition. Did Paulson want to imply that he would do his project on his own, independent of FIDE? In that case he is a real daredevil.

The leadership of FIDE, with all its defects, has proven that there is one thing it is really good at, and that is derailing any attempt at opposing them. Never underestimate FIDE, said Svetozar Gligoric to me back in 1989, and he was right. The present FIDE leadership might well contentedly mumble the old Chinese proverb: 'If you sit long enough at the bank of the river, you'll see the corpse of your enemy float by.'

Biometric carnival

Sweat, pulse, blood pressure, skin resistivity. Lady Gaga has proclaimed the Body Revolution 2013 and Paulson's chessworld may follow suit. His keepers of the Holy Grail are in a cockpit, closely surrounded by the spectators. What are these spectators looking at? In a circus atmosphere, resembling a cockfight or chess-boxing ring more than a traditional tournament, they can hardly be expected to ponder the intricacies of a difficult chess game. It will be all about the body, not about the moves.

During the London Grand Prix leg there was some criticism about the absence of live expert grandmaster commentary. It is easy to imagine that in the future this commentary will be taken over by medical specialists: pulse 100, skin resistivity down

by transpiration, but hey look, what's going on there, that's a nasty pulse graph peaking. Oh no, is our number four still alright?

There will be the screams of the martial arts, at first only from the spectators, but later also from the players themselves, who thereby release the strain and hazards that come from great excitement without physical activity.

In a corner of our computer screen we will still see a green line. It's Houdini's graph of the game. As long as chances are equal, it's a more or less straight line, but when the assessment changes, there will be extreme ups or downs, and at the end there is a stable peak: White wins. One look at this graph is enough to get a fair idea of how the game is developing. With medical comment and the game graph, real moves will no longer be necessary for the spectators to be informed.

But will they still be played when the public won't look at them? I think they will. Even a carnival of biometric data will need the aura of real chess, at least for a while.

In the clutches of science

Biometric measurements of chess players in action are not new. Around 1980 there was a scientific congress in Germany on Chess and Medicine. Experiments were done. One I remember was a game between Spassky and Helmut Pfleger, who is a grandmaster and a medical doctor. Pfleger had taken beta-blockers, which are considered to combat stress. And indeed they did – so effectively that a blissfully relaxed Pfleger could blunder a piece and keep his peace of mind, resigning the game without feeling bad about it.

This story, related in the *Deutsche Schachzeitung*, caused me to refuse beta-blockers years later, when I got them prescribed for an eye ailment. My eye still seems to be all right, but without beta-blockers I had to find a different excuse for my fading chess strength.

During the Dutch championship of 2010, a small real-life experiment was conducted when Loek van Wely, always in for a little adventure, agreed to wear stress-measuring instruments during his game against Benjamin Bok.

This seems to have been a case in which the measurement heavily influenced the object being measured, for the game developed in a way unimaginable under normal circumstances. For the last 25 moves, between moves 12 and 37, they just repeated moves and only after one position had appeared 12 times on the board and another position 13 times, did they agree on a draw. I do not know the verdict of Van Wely's stressometer, but I think that during that game he was in need of an exorcist, not a psychologist.

'In chess there is a natural restraint on delusions of grandeur by the simple fact that after some wins there will be a loss.'

Listen to your heart

In December last year, the *ChessBase* website carried an article by two Argentine scientists, Maria Juliana Leone and Mariano Sigman, who had measured the heartbeat of chess players during 15-minute games. Classical games are different, of course, but still there is food for thought here.

Some of their findings were hardly surprising. The heart rate accelerates after a blunder of the opponent. It also accelerates when the player is involved in calculation or in drawing up a strategic plan.

What I found most interesting was the difference in heart rate before making a blunder or before making a normal move.

A few seconds before a normal move, the player's heart rate slowed down considerably, regaining its normal speed – in the sense of average frequency during the game – soon afterwards. But with a blunder it was quite different. A few seconds before the fatal decision the heart rate already increased, and it stayed so for a while after the bad move had been made.

This suggests that the body was already aware of the blunder shortly before the conscious decision to commit it had been made. This is a mechanism that has often come up in psychophysiology, for instance in the famous James-Lange theory, about a century old, that says, to put it simplistically, that you don't cry because you feel sad, but that you feel sad because the brain has registered that you are crying.

The Argentinean scientists' findings also suggest a way to avoid blunders. Train yourself to listen to your heartbeat. If it accelerates, beware, for it might presage a blunder. If this is too difficult, the old precept to sit on your hands might still be useful.

Fooling the muppets

Many strong players, after giving up their professional chess career, have thrived in the financial world. I am thinking of the Brits David Norwood and Luke McShane and the Americans Norman Weinstein, Max Dlugy, Patrick Wolff and Anna Hahn. I'm sure there are more. And so, when there was a programme on Dutch television called Banker's Brain recently, I watched it with the expectation to learn something not only about the mind of the financial wizards, but also about chess players.

The wizards have engineered an economic crisis with, at the time of

writing, an unemployment rate of almost 12 percent in the euro zone. Of course, European politicians have played their part with cruel and self-defeating austerity programmes, but in the beginning there were the wizards, whom this TV programme studied anthropologically as if they were an exotic tribe. It was not about economic theories, but about adrenaline and testosterone.

One former trader thought that almost all his colleagues were psychopaths, characterized by shallow emotions, high stress tolerance, egocentricity and manipulativeness. Another one thought that the percentage of psychopaths in the financial world was no higher than, for instance, in the average prison population, but he agreed that psychopathological behaviour was strongly reinforced by the customs of the financial world.

The traders lived in an amoral world of their own, inventing financial products that were so complicated that customers would not be able to understand them. These dumb customers, unwittingly buying suicide schemes, were called muppets. Muppets are basically the rest of the world.

It was easy to find resemblances between the mental make-up of the financial wizards and that of chess players, but the differences seemed to be very much in favour of chess.

In chess there is a natural restraint on delusions of grandeur by the simple fact that after some wins there will be a loss. In finance there is not, for extreme risk-taking is generally rewarded when it succeeds, but also when it fails. One example – but actually it seems to be just the way of their world – is Boaz Weinstein, an American National Master in chess who is said to have lost almost two billion dollars in 2008 for Deutsche Bank and then recovered enough to buy a 25 million dollar property on Manhattan's Fifth Avenue last year. Once in a while, a scapegoat employee goes to jail, but that doesn't affect the morale of the troops.

The Dutch TV programme also made clear that in finance there is a mind-numbing power of group-think, which forces everybody to think alike and adopt the same pseudo-values. I cherish the thought that chess players are far freer.

Close your eyes and think of Tata

And so we must sing the praises of chess, if not for other reasons, than at least for the fact that chess keeps many bright minds out of the occupations in which they would do great harm to the world.

Late last year, the vendor who sells the street newspaper at my neighbourhood supermarket told me that 2013 would be a terrible year, not only for him, but for all of us. He pronounced the number with disgust. 'Two thousand thirteen, the sound alone. Can't you hear that it's all wrong?'

Because he plays chess I told him that it would be a wonderful chess year, with a Candidates' tournament, a World Championship match and Grand Prix tournaments in the finest cities of the world. He just shrugged and repeated the word 2013, as if this was argument enough.

When I came home late on New Year's Eve, I found that two windows had been shattered by the fireworks of hooligans. Would the prophet of doom be right after all? No, I wouldn't accept that.

Close your eyes and think of England. This is said to have been the advice that Victorian English ladies gave to their innocent daughters as preparation for their wedding night. I cleaned up the broken glass and thought of the Tata Steel tournament.

Such a delight, with six players out of the Top-10 and a few friendly Dutch players to root for. I could almost smell the pea soup and the wet winter coats of Wijk aan Zee. A wonderful chess year had almost started. ■

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Just Checking

Malcolm Pein

CURRENT ELO: ‘Don’t know, somewhere below 2400’

DATE OF BIRTH: August 14, 1960

PLACE OF BIRTH: Liverpool, UK

PLACE OF RESIDENCE: London, UK

What is your favourite colour?
Red.

What food makes you happy?
Thai.

And what drink?
Mojito.

Who is your favourite author?
Tom Sharpe, Boris Akunin.

What was the most interesting book you ever read?
Thinking, Fast and Slow by Daniel Kahneman.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
Dead heat between *Life of Brian* and *Borat*.

What is your favourite TV series?
Blackadder.

Do you have a favourite actor?
No.

And a favourite actress?
Maggie Smith (by some distance).

What music do you like to listen to?
Pretty much everything bar Country and Western.

Do you have a favourite painter?
Too many – David Hockney.

What was your best result ever?
Never really achieved much – but Oviedo 1992, no idea how I managed that.

What was the best game you ever played?
Hmm – Not applicable? I suppose Pein v. (*young*, emphasise this) Svidler, Lloyds Bank 1991, was not bad.

Who is your favourite chess player of all time?
Tigran Petrosian, his strategic depth, I learnt so much from his games and he was a brilliant and under-estimated tactician.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
The tournament book of the Petropolis and Leningrad Interzonals 1973 – incredible games and notes. But for influence, Keres and Kotov, *The Art of the Middle Game*.

What was the most exciting chess game you ever saw?
Sorry, another tie: Kramnik-Kasparov at the 1994 Kremlin Intel GP, second game – the crowd went mad, and Kasparov-Short, Game 1, 1993.

What is the best chess country in the world?
I guess it has to be Holland or Iceland, chess has some respect and status it seems to me.

What are chess players particularly good at (except for chess)?
Computer programming, poker and bumming around.

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?
No.

What is it that you appreciate most in a person?
A sense of humour.

What is it that you dislike in a person?
I try not to.

Do you have any superstitions concerning chess?
I like to point my knights at the opponent’s king. Wishful thinking.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren’t yourself?
A professional layabout.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
John Lennon, Bill Clinton, Bill Shankly.

Is there something you’d love to learn?
How to use my blasted iPod and other electronic devices without having to ask the kids.

What is your greatest fear?
Dying after my children.

If you could change one thing in the chess world, what would it be?
The Muppet.

What is the stupidest rule in chess?
The zero tolerance rule.

What will be the nationality of the 2050 chess world champion?
Kalmykian.

Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
Yes.

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?
All you talk about in chess is take, take, take, why is there never any give? – Mrs Philippa Pein.

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